SPECIAL TACTICS

SQUAD-LEVEL
INFANTRY RURAL COMBAT

SMALL UNIT TACTICS AND BATTLECRAFT FOR INFANTRY AND RECON UNITS

DEVELOPED BY SPECIAL OPERATIONS & INFANTRY VETERANS

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INFANTRY RURAL COMBAT

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SPECIAL TACTICS™

Special Tactics, LLC

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To those who have gone before us, the living and the fallen

COURSE OVERVIEW
Infantry Combat vs. Infantry Doctrine

There are countless manuals, books, schools, and schoolhouse curricula that focus on infantry doctrine. Doctrine is a critically important building block for all military operations. It provides a set of commonly understood procedures and vocabulary to ensure members of a military force are on the same page and speaking the same language. A military force cannot fight effectively without sound doctrine. However, if this was a book about infantry doctrine, it would only be useful for the military forces that shared that same doctrine. The doctrinal procedures of one force often differ from those of other forces. Even within the U.S. military, the Army and Marine Corps take quite different doctrinal approaches to squad level operations.

Therefore, we specifically designed this book to focus on areas that are neglected by doctrinal teachings and publications, namely topics that deal with real-world tactics, techniques and procedures for defeating a living, thinking enemy on the battlefield. Doctrine, by design, leaves a degree of flexibility when it comes to the specific ways to fight and win in real combat. The intention is that doctrine provides a general guideline and it is up to individual leaders to refine their own tactics and fighting skills to fit the specific real-world mission requirements. Unfortunately, there are few resources to help leaders with this difficult second task and units often have little time to practice fighting under realistic conditions. Special Tactics aims to help fill that knowledge gap.

Doctrine, as it is taught in most military manuals and military schools focuses primarily on processes. For example, in schools that teach small unit tactics, students are primarily graded on whether or not they complete prescribed steps in the correct order. In field exercises, scenarios are often canned and even variables tend to be predictable. The opposing force (OPFOR) is frequently under-strength and isn't allowed to fight aggressively to win, but instead simply rolls over and dies once the students execute the assigned procedures according to doctrine. There is nothing wrong with this sort of training since it is intentionally structured to help students master a baseline of doctrinal processes. However, learning doctrine alone does not necessarily help you know how to win an actual fight on the battlefield.

To take one example from a U.S. military school, two officers received perfect scores on a planning exercise. However, upon examining each of the officers' tactical plans, one officer used the terrain effectively while the other emplaced his machine guns directly on a hilltop 20-minutes before sunrise, which would have made them very easy for the enemy to see against the lighted sky. In a real-world combat situation only one of these two officers would have achieved success, but because the schoolhouse grading system focused only on whether students correctly followed a doctrinal process and completed specific doctrinal steps, both officers received identical, perfect marks for the planning exercise.

This story is not intended to discredit or devalue doctrinal schools. Once again, doctrine and process-based learning is a critical component of military operations. Exercises that teach rote memorization of doctrine and procedures have their place. However, it is important to recognize the gap that results when the vast majority of military schools teach only doctrine and processes and neglect the art of how to win a fight in a real-world combat situation. Some junior leaders might not even be aware that another art exists beyond doctrine and outside of it, because all they have studied and trained on is doctrine. To win on the battlefield, both doctrine and real-world combat mastery are needed.

This book aims to help fill a gap in the education of infantrymen and infantry leaders. This book focuses on proven techniques and concepts to help a squad win in combat. Instead of re-hashing topics that are frequently discussed in other manuals or schoolhouses, this book looks for the missing pieces that are frequently left out of an infantryman's education. This book goes into detail on topics such as team/squad formations, tactical movement, route selection, tactical use of terrain, fire and maneuver.

Once again, this book is intended to be useful for any infantry unit regardless of its doctrine. The vast majority of topics discussed in this book are not covered in official doctrinal publications and if they are covered, they are covered only very generally. Therefore, infantry leaders should be able to simply "plug in" most of the techniques and concepts in this book into their existing doctrine and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). If there are any sections of this book that contradict your specific doctrinal requirements, the book is designed to be modular and flexible so you can pick and choose the techniques that work for your unit while putting aside others that are not a good fit.

What This Book Covers

The topic of infantry operations is vast and complex and it would be impossible to cover all aspects of infantry operations in detail in a single book, even if focused only on the squad level. This book goes into much more detail than most doctrinal manuals. For example, this book spends approximately 200-pages covering topics that take up only 18-pages in the 2011 Ranger Handbook. Given that the Ranger Handbook is approximately 350-pages, it would take almost 4,000 pages to address all the topics discussed in the Ranger Handbook with the detailed approach taken by this manual. Therefore, to keep the manual readable and usable we have had to leave many topics out to be covered in future manuals.

We consider the material in this book to be the most universally applicable to all infantry operations. This book essentially focuses exclusively on what would be termed "battle drills" in doctrinal manuals, along with the necessary knowledge of topics such as formations, tactical movement and terrain to make execution of battle drills effective. This book is about how to destroy the enemy with fire, maneuver and close combat. Regardless of the mission set and greater operational context, those core combat skills should generally remain useful.

That being said, the tactics and concepts in this book will be less useful if not plugged in to a larger operational context. For example, this book will be more useful if employed in conjunction with a publication like the Ranger Handbook that discusses topics like mission planning, the orders process and patrolling, which are not covered in this book. In other cases, like COIN (Counterinsurgency Operations), this book will be more useful if employed in conjunction with our ***Small War Tactics*** manual or another COIN doctrinal publication. In short, in order to focus on the art of actual infantry combat, this book leaves out many other important topics that are critical components of infantry operations.

Who This Book is For and How to Use It

While intended primarily for infantry and recon units operating in a rural environment, the concepts and techniques in this book should be useful for any individual or tactical unit fighting outdoors. Law Enforcement officers might find themselves in a firefight with criminals or gang-members in the woods or may have to pursue perpetrators on foot in a rural environment. Security professionals might need to plan roving patrols through rural terrain or provide close protection for clients in rural environments. A citizen living in a rural area may need to defend his/her property in the event they encounter a trespasser with deadly intentions. Not all the information in this book might apply to every one of these individuals, but the general knowledge and concepts have applications to many aspects of tactics and self-defense.

This book is also not only intended to be useful for small unit leaders or squad-level troopers. Having a firm grasp and understanding of squad-level combat is critical for the mastery of platoon-level combat and company-level combat. Understanding the nature of small unit fire and maneuver is even useful for higher-level commanders at the operational and strategic levels. Even if you are in command of an entire corps or army, the actual calculus of victory or defeat plays out at the ground level, where individual combatants, teams and squads fight for survival in close combat. Having a greater contextual understanding of the lowest levels of combat can be useful for higher-level commanders, especially if it has been a while since they have experienced warfare from the tip of the spear.

Just reading this book will not make you more effective in rural combat. You must practice the techniques in this book over and over as part of a more complete tactical training, weapons training and fitness program in order to truly enhance your combat performance. While you can read this book from cover-to-cover for background, you will find that some sections are repetitive which is intended to make each section of the book self-contained. A more practical way to use the book is to reference the sections that are most relevant to you in the

context of a larger training program. The book is designed to complement other books from Special Tactics as well as online courses and in-person training. Reading this book is only the beginning to becoming proficient at the art of infantry rural combat.

One final note on terminology, this book sometimes uses the terms “troops” or “troopers” to refer to infantrymen. This is simply intended to make the book familiar and compatible with all military forces. For example, Marines specifically use the term “Marine” and never use the Army term of “Soldier” to describe their personnel. By using neutral terms, the passages in this book could be referring to any military force: Army, Marine, Navy, Air Force, Special Operations or NATO/Allied.

INTRODUCTION
The Four Pillars of Survival

The "four pillars" of survival are proper mindset, situational awareness, skill proficiency and physical fitness. These pillars form the basis for success in all combat situations. This manual is intended not only to teach specific techniques, but rather to increase the reader's actual chances of survival and success in a real-life emergency. An expert marksman who is not mentally prepared for the stress of combat and not ready to employ lethal force can lose to an untrained adversary. Lack of situational awareness, even for a moment, can cause an experienced fighter to fall victim to unskilled enemies. Therefore, any combat training program must rest on the following four pillars.

Proper Mindset

Proper mindset is the most critical of the four pillars. In the simplest terms, people with the proper mindset devote significant time and energy to protecting themselves and their loved ones from the worst-case scenario. Many people will learn to shoot a pistol or study a martial art but their skills decline quickly because they fail to practice frequently enough. Having the proper mindset means being tough, determined, never cutting corners and taking every precaution to ensure survival. In a combat situation, having the proper mindset means being prepared to employ lethal force without hesitation and never quitting during the fight regardless of fear or pain. The training suggestions in this manual will help you develop the proper mindset.

Situational Awareness

Lack of situational awareness is one of the leading causes of failure or death in combat situations. In modern society, most people's situational awareness is very low. They generally spend their day wrapped up in their own thoughts and problems and pay little attention to what is going on

around them. People who live in relatively secure environments fall into even deeper levels of complacency and unpreparedness. The mentality of, "it can't happen to me," can ultimately prove to be disastrously wrong. Most victims of crime, terrorism and other deadly attacks lived their lives thinking, "it can't happen to me."

People with the proper mindset understand the importance of situational awareness and make disciplined efforts to cultivate it. Situational awareness begins with awareness of the threat and awareness that bad things can happen to anyone. Situational awareness involves trying to remain alert at all times without being paranoid. Situational awareness also involves keeping up with local news, and studying trends in violent crime. Those committed to protecting their families might conduct research to identify registered sex offenders in their area. When you travel to a new city, it is useful to learn which neighborhoods have a higher crime rate and plan your route accordingly. The best way to improve your situational awareness is to make a conscious effort to continually cultivate and improve it.

Skill Proficiency

Once you have the proper mindset and maintain good situational awareness, the next step is to ensure you have the proper skills or "tools" to protect yourself in a combat situation. When striving to improve skill proficiency it is important to choose the best skills and techniques that are simple, effective, easy to perform and can realistically apply to a real-life scenario. Then you must practice these techniques repeatedly until they become second nature. This will maximize the chances that you will respond immediately in a high-stress situation. The central focus of this manual is to help you build skill proficiency.

Physical Fitness

Fitness is a critical but often overlooked factor that affects your chances of survival in a combat situation. Even skilled fighters with the proper mindset and high levels of situational awareness can lose a fight simply because they run out of energy. In order to maintain adequate levels of combat fitness, you do not need to achieve the same fitness level as a professional or Olympic athlete. Rather, the key is merely to stay healthy, maintain a decent level of cardiovascular endurance, running speed, functional strength and coordination. Popular commercial fitness programs don't always focus on the most useful abilities needed for combat. For example, many people jog but how many also run sprints to build speed? Simply being able to run fast without falling is one of the most critical survival skills in a gunfight or emergency situation, yet most people rarely practice sprinting. For those interested in combat fitness, Special Tactics provides a range of books and courses on the subject.

INFANTRY COMBAT
Concepts and Fundamentals

Due to a number of factors, there is some degree of confusion about the true nature of infantry combat or what infantry combat would look like in a real-world scenario. While this book is intended to be useful for all types of infantry combat, before diving into specific tactics, techniques and procedures, it is useful to understand how these tactics might apply to a bigger operational picture.

One factor that has led to confusion and misunderstandings about infantry combat is the predominance of Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. During this time, infantry units were required to perform tasks that shared more in common with peacekeeping operations, community policing or counterterrorism than they did with traditional infantry missions. In many cases, the concepts and mandates of the COIN mission directly contradicted the nature of traditional infantry combat. While COIN operations require restraint, the surgical application of force and even emotional empathy, traditional infantry operations require aggressiveness, violence of action and massing maximum firepower at the decisive time and place. Both COIN operations and traditional infantry operations are important, but the predominance of COIN has led many infantrymen to forget about the nature of infantry combat in a high-intensity, conventional war.

The other main factor that has led to confusion about infantry combat is the nature of infantry training in some doctrinal schoolhouses. The most well-known infantry schools focus either on COIN scenarios taken from real-world mission data, or on traditional infantry small unit patrolling, taken largely from experience in the Vietnam War. Small unit patrolling rarely involves a unit larger than a platoon and entails a unit moving by itself through enemy territory, setting up an ORP (Objective Rally Point), conducting a leader's recon of an objective, executing a raid or linear ambush on a small enemy force, then moving to and occupying a patrol base.

Small unit patrolling is an important part of infantry operations but even in conventional warfare it is only one part of a larger picture and the majority of infantry missions and combat will likely look very different from the classic squad-level patrol or linear ambush. In most conventional warfare scenarios, squads will generally not be operating alone, patrolling behind

enemy lines. In most cases squads will be operating as part of a platoon or even more likely, as part of a company or battalion. If squads or platoons are conducting independent patrols, those patrols would still be closely coordinated with higher-level operations. This dramatically changes what a real-world infantry mission would look like compared to what most junior leaders are used to experiencing in the schoolhouse.

Another classic misconception about infantry combat is that it will likely take the form of one small unit encountering an enemy small unit deep in the woods. While this book does use such scenarios to demonstrate tactical concepts, these scenarios are not likely to actually take place in real life the way they are depicted in this book. In what situation would one squad be walking through the woods and bump into another squad that was walking through the woods? Do such chance encounters sometimes occur in conventional warfare? Yes of course. However, infantry squads are much more likely to find themselves taking part in larger operations to defend or capture key terrain such as hilltops and river crossings. Such operations frequently involve the integration of combined arms (tanks, artillery and aircraft) and often include prepared defensive positions and fortifications.

This book is designed to be useful for all types of infantry operations. Whether you are engaged in COIN/peacekeeping operations, small unit patrols or high-intensity conventional warfare, the basic fundamentals for how to destroy the enemy through fire, maneuver and close combat always apply in some form. That being said, to truly benefit from the teachings in this book you must understand them in a larger operational context. A technique in this book might depict one squad bounding forward and using the terrain to destroy another squad by fire. However, in a real world application, that exact same concept or maneuver might be employed by a squad that is acting as the local support-by-fire for a platoon that is the assault element for a company-level attack on a fortified position. The techniques in this book are only building blocks. Employing them effectively requires a broader understanding of the nature of real-world infantry combat.

How this Book is Organized

This book follows a fairly logical sequence as it builds up to the point of teaching how to fight and defeat the enemy using fire, maneuver and close combat. The next sections begin with discussion of how to organize the squad into fire teams and machine gun teams and where to assign/position leaders. It then goes on to a detailed discussion of infantry formations at both the team and squad level, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each. Not all of these formations might fit with your doctrine or prove useful to your unit, but understanding them is critical to mastering combat maneuvers.

The book then goes on to discuss tactical movement techniques at the individual, team and squad level. Once you understand formations, the next step is to learn how to move using those formations in a way that gives you a tactical advantage over the enemy. This section also discusses specific combat applications for tactical movement techniques that are frequently left out of most tactical manuals and training schools. Next, the discussion progresses to tactical

navigation and route selection, applying the movement techniques you just learned to longer distance movements over various types of terrain, using the terrain to your advantage as much as possible based on the specific mission requirements.

Finally, the book transitions to a discussion of fire, maneuver and close combat, how to fight and defeat the enemy on the battlefield. This section begins by linking the previous discussions of formation, movement and navigation to the moment where troops make contact with enemy forces. The book then covers immediate action, the traditional battle drill concept and the advantages and disadvantages of traditional battle drills. The next chapters cover fire and maneuver for two-element squads and three-element squads. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion of defensive combat at the squad level.

UNIT ORGANIZATION
Squads, Teams and Machine Guns

Unit organization or unit structure is the first topic to discuss when learning infantry tactics at any level. While it is not the most exciting topic, it provides a frame of reference that is necessary to understand all other aspects of tactics. Units and sub-units are the building blocks for tactical formations, tactical maneuvers, tactical plans and command-and-control systems. The important thing to understand about unit organization is that while each military force or country has quite specific ways of organizing forces, there is no single best way to organize. Each system has its own advantages and disadvantages. While you will likely need to adhere to the restrictions of your own force's military doctrine, understanding the deeper principles and concepts behind unit organization will improve your professional competence and combat performance.

The squad is generally considered the smallest infantry element capable of independent combat missions and tactical maneuver. While it is possible to conduct missions with any size element, even a single person, it is rare for modern military forces to deploy an element smaller than a squad into combat by itself. The most common exception to this rule would be conducting reconnaissance missions with smaller elements, but even these smaller elements generally operate with the support of additional troops. Therefore, the squad level is the logical starting point for studying infantry tactics.

The term "squad" is the term used by most conventional U.S. military forces but of course, other countries and organizations may use different terms. For example, the British military uses the term "section" in place of squad. In some special units, a squad-sized elements might be called a "team." Therefore, while we use the term "squad," the same tactics and concepts can apply to any squad-sized element regardless of what it is called.

Size of the Squad

Squads are generally comprised of 7-13 infantrymen There are a number of factors that affect the size of an infantry squad and in turn, the size of the squad affects its capabilities. In modern, mechanized warfare, the size of the squad frequently relates to the carrying capacity of the vehicle the squad is supposed to ride in. However, since squads might employ different types of vehicles based on availability and mission profile, this can require units to make some ad-hoc adjustments to unit sizes to better fit the vehicles being used for a mission.

Casualties can also make it necessary to adjust unit sizes. People who get too fixated on having an exact number of troops in a squad forget that in high-intensity combat, the size of a squad might change from one second to the next. For these reasons, it is important to understand the deeper principles and concepts behind squad organization. Therefore, if the size of the squad must change based on the situation, the unit still remains organized and is able to operate like before.

Teams and Sub-Elements

In most modern, professional militaries, squads are divided into sub-elements. In the U.S. military, these smaller elements are called "teams" or "fireteams." For example, in the U.S. Army a squad includes two, four-person teams. In the U.S. Marine Corps, a squad includes three, four-person teams. Splitting the squad up into teams or sub-elements allows the squad to conduct independent maneuver since one element can provide supporting/suppressive fire while the other element moves. We will discuss fire and maneuver in much more detail later in the book. At this point, it is only important to understand that dividing the squad into multiple elements allows those elements to split up and do different things, making the squad more capable and versatile.

However, dividing the squad into multiple elements also creates more complexity and requires additional subordinate leaders to lead those sub-elements. Militaries that are less well-trained, less professional or have few junior leaders might choose not to split the squad up into multiple elements. Instead, a single squad-leader controls the entire squad as a single element that moves and fires as one. While less capable and flexible, this arrangement is easier to control. The disadvantages of this arrangement are also less relevant in military forces that rely on numbers and attrition rather than maneuver and combat skill.

Teams within a squad can also vary depending on the type of weapons they use. We will discuss this more in the next paragraph. Some teams might be made up primarily of riflemen and carry less weight. These teams focus more on mobility and closing with the enemy. Other elements might be built around a machine gun or heavy weapon. Machine gun teams are typically smaller, only 2-3 people, since their purpose is primarily to employ the gun itself to provide supporting fire. Extra rifles are more useful for the elements that are advancing and closing with the enemy.

Squad Weapons Overview

Most squad members will carry an assault rifle or automatic rifle, usually either 5.56mm or 7.62mm. The assault rifle is light weight and reasonable accurate and powerful. While most assault rifles have the ability to fire in a fully automatic mode, they are generally more effective when operated in single-shot mode. In addition, individual riflemen generally don't carry enough ammunition to fire their rifles on full-auto for any length of time. Below is an example of a common 5.56mm assault rifle with no optics attached.

While the rifle is the most common infantry weapon, the machine gun is typically the most decisive and important weapon in the squad. The firepower provided by a machine gun can sometimes be considered greater than the rest of the squad weapons combined. This is because of the machine gun's high rate of fire, greater range and the armor penetration of the larger, faster machine gun bullets. Since it is such a critical weapon, most modern squads will employ at least one machine gun. However, the way these guns are employed and organized in the squad can vary. Below is an example of a 7.62 mm medium machine gun.

In the U.S. military, light machine guns (5.56 mm) are organic to each team. This means the machine guns go wherever the team goes. However, medium machine guns (7.62 mm) are not organic to the squad but are assigned at the platoon-level, one unit level above the squad. This

allows the platoon leader to assign the machine guns to whatever squad he/she chooses. Ideally, each squad will have a medium machine gun attached. Therefore, a typical U.S. Army squad will have 2 x light machine guns and 1 x medium machine gun. Below is an example of a 5.56 mm light machine gun.

Not all military forces organize their machine guns in this way. In some forces, medium machine guns are organic to the squad. This means that the machine gun is actually part of the squad and goes everywhere the squad goes. In some cases the squad might have additional light machine guns distributed among the other teams or in other cases, the single medium machine gun will provide the centerpiece of firepower while the rest of the squad focuses on speed and mobility.

The other most common squad weapon is the grenade launcher. The grenade launcher is particularly useful for firing at areas that the squad members cannot directly see, since grenades can be lobbed over hills and walls etc. In the U.S. Army, each team has one person who is equipped with a 40mm grenade launcher. Therefore, the standard U.S. Army squad has a total of 2 x light machine guns, 2 x 40mm grenade launchers and an optional attachment of at least 1 x medium machine gun. Below is an example of an assault rifle equipped with a 40mm grenade launcher.

Succession of Command

One of the most critical aspects of any unit's organization is the succession of command. Most infantry doctrine will advocate reviewing the succession of command during an operations order or pre-mission briefing, however, in most cases, the leader will only emphasize the first few levels of command and there will not be an established or rehearsed plan for what to do if all or most of the leaders in the unit are lost.

Instead of just mentioning it during the operation order, succession of command should be emphasized in every aspect of training and operations. The succession command will go from the senior leader down to the most junior unit member and everyone in the unit must know the succession of command by heart. More importantly, during training events units have to practice reacting when leaders are killed. Junior personnel must be able to step up, assume command and continue the fight without the unit losing momentum.

Squad Organization Options

Given the factors just discussed about squad size, the option of splitting the squad into multiple teams/elements and the assignment of squad weapons, there are a number of different ways to combine these various factors when organizing the infantry squad. Each option has its own advantages and disadvantages. As already stated, in most cases military personnel will be somewhat restricted in how they can organize their squads. However, it is still very useful to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the available options to better understand your own strengths and weaknesses, understand enemy strengths and weaknesses and to be ready to make ad-hoc organizational adjustments in extreme or special situations.

The main options available when organizing a squad relate to how many teams or sub elements you choose to employ (generally two or three), whether your teams are balanced or unbalanced, and how you position/assign leaders and heavy weapons. The following pages and illustrations go into more detail on the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Note that the following examples only offer a selection of common organization options and there are nearly unlimited ways to organize combat units.

SQUAD ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Number of Teams or Sub-Elements

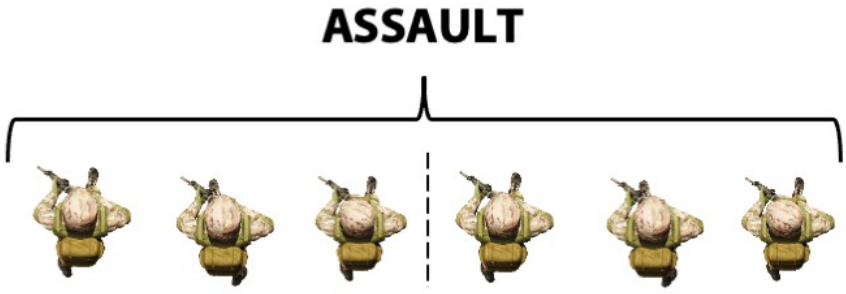
How many teams a squad is divided into is generally dictated by organizational/unit doctrine. However, it is useful to understand the pros and cons of each approach. In general, more teams offer greater flexibility but are more difficult to control. Generally speaking, squads with more sub-elements have to be larger since each sub-element should include at least three or four personnel. In some cases casualties, manpower constraints, lack of qualified leaders or the limitations of transport vehicles might make it more difficult to employ multiple teams in each squad. In these cases, understrength teams might need to be combined in order to increase combat effectiveness and mitigate risk.

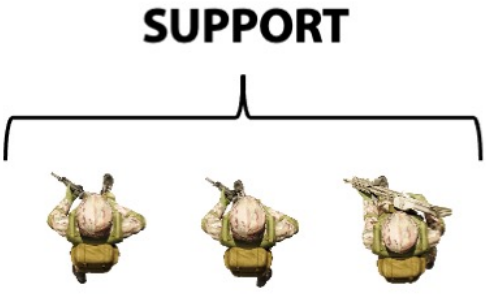
SINGLE SQUAD	TWO TEAMS	THREE TEAMS
Not dividing the squad into teams is generally only appropriate for forces with limited experience, undisciplined troops or lack of small unit leaders. A single squad limits maneuver options but greatly simplifies things for an inexperienced squad.	Dividing the squad into two teams offers a wide variety of movement and maneuver options including guard elements, bounding and flanking. Two teams are also relatively easy for a single squad leader to control, particularly inside a building.	Dividing the squad into three teams offers additional flexibility and maneuver options such as adding local support-by-fire capacity to the maneuver element. However, three teams can prove difficult to control, especially for less experienced leaders.

SQUAD ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Unbalanced Teams

While it is possible to keep equal numbers of personnel in each team, it is also an option to assign more personnel to one team than to the other. There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to this approach. Assigning more personnel to the assault or maneuver element offers more flexibility, including the ability to conduct split-team maneuvers. In addition, a larger assault element is better able to press the assault after sustaining casualties. However, having pre-designated assault (maneuver) and support elements reduces flexibility since each element always has to play the same role. If both teams are similar, either one can choose to assume the assault or support role based on the situation. A smaller support element is also more vulnerable on its own and less able to defend itself from flanking attacks.



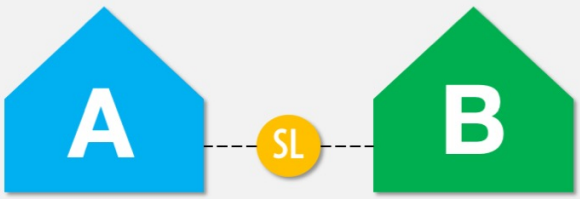


SQUAD ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Independent vs. Integrated Squad Leader

There is no single right answer for where to assign the squad leader. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. When employing an independent squad leader, you keep the squad leader separate from both teams and assign each team its own team leader. The squad leader can remain between the teams and move back and forth as needed. To employ an integrated squad leader, the squad leader leads one team and the ASL (Assistant Squad Leader) leads the other team. In this situation, both SL and ASL act as team leaders but the SL is still in overall control of the squad. Generally this option is better suited to experienced units since it requires each team leader to act on his/her own initiative without central authority. The diagram below compares the advantages and disadvantages of employing an independent squad leader vs. an integrated squad leader.

INDEPENDENT SQUAD LEADER



ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
- Squad leader able to move back and fourth to assist each team as needed - Squad leader is better able to control attached heavy weapons like machine guns	- Extra layer of command can make it more difficult or slower for the teams to communicate laterally - More likely SL can become separated from the squad - Requires 3 leaders instead of two

INTEGRATED SQUAD LEADER

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
- Faster, "flatter" communication between squads - Easier to maneuver in urban or restricted terrain - Squad Leader is less isolated	- Squad leader tied to one team - Can make attachments more difficult to control - Requires more experienced leaders/teams

SQUAD ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Machine Gun Option 1: Independent

There is no single right answer for where to assign an attached machine gun. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. One option is to keep the machine gun separate from the teams. In this situation, it is usually best for the squad leader to also be independent so he/she can control the gun and position it at the most advantageous location on the battlefield. Note that in squads with multiple machine guns, you might employ both independent and integrated guns. An example of this is the U.S. Army rifle squad where the light machine guns are integrated into the teams but the medium machine gun is generally independent and remains with the squad leader.

ADVANTAGES
- Machine gun remains flexible and can be positioned anywhere or attached to either team as needed - Squad leader can maintain direct control over the positioning and employment of the machine gun
DISADVANTAGES
- Emplacing the gun can cause a momentary delay when maneuvering - Without a dedicated team in direct support, the machine gun is more likely to run out of ammunition

SQUAD ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

Machine Gun Option 2: Integrated

Another option is to keep the machine gun with one team. The machine gun can be assigned either to the squad leader's team or the assistant squad leader's team and can move either in the lead or in trail. Note that even if the machine gun is integrated into a particular team that does not mean that the gun cannot be assigned to the other team as needed. Still, it is more difficult for the gun to move back and forth between teams as it does when independent. Integrated machine guns are also the norm for units that employ unbalanced teams where one of the teams is a smaller support element. The gun will naturally be assigned to the support team.

ADVANTAGES
- One team can focus on supporting the gun's employment, carrying extra ammunition etc. - Allows for quicker reactions and maneuver - Leaves the maneuver team lighter and more mobile
DISADVANTAGES
- Less flexibility since the machine gun is pre-assigned to one team - Having the machine gun either in the trail or the lead can limit maneuver options

TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Introduction to Formations

When learning to move tactically as a unit, one of the first things you must understand is tactical movement formations. Formations dictate how troops position themselves in relation to each other. Formations are important for a number of reasons that we will discuss in more detail in this chapter. Each formation has pros and cons in terms of mobility, firepower and vulnerability. You will have to give up an advantage in one area to gain an advantage in another.

Mobility and Control

Mobility is how fast you can move and change direction without breaking the formation. In general, the more team members are "following behind" one another, the greater mobility the formation will have. This is because it is easy to run fast and change direction when all you have to do is follow the person in front of you, even in the dark or rough terrain. The more team members are "side-by-side" the less mobile the formation is and the slower you will have to move to maintain your formation, especially at night or in difficult terrain.

Mobility and control are related. When it is easy to move and change direction quickly without breaking formation, control is generally greater as well. However, formations where every team member can be seen by more than one fellow team member also offer more control than formations where one team member is isolated on the edge of the formation. For example, while moving in a single file makes it easy to move fast and in some ways it is easy to control the formation because of its simplicity, there is also a risk of leaving the last person in the formation behind, so control is less effective from that perspective. In terms of accountability, a diamond formation where all team members can see each other and see the leader offers better control. When evaluating the mobility and control offered by each formation, you must consider your specific mission requirements, the terrain and enemy situation.

Firepower

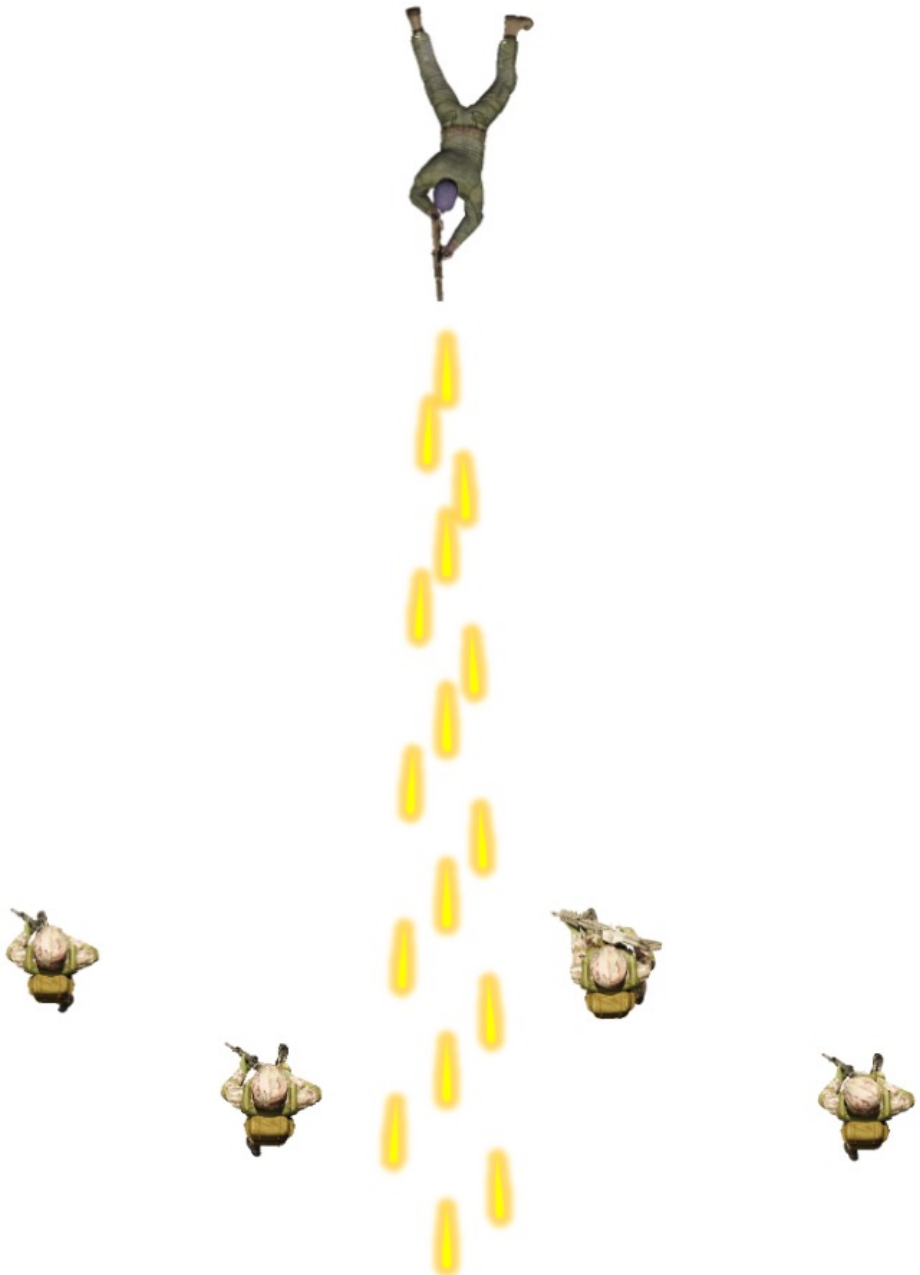
Firepower is how much fire you can mass in a given direction without adjusting formation. Formations will typically offer good firepower in some directions but not in others. The reason why formations offer better firepower in a one direction and poorer firepower in another, is because of the risk of team members accidentally shooting each other. If a team member is between you and the target, he/she is "masking" your fire and you cannot fire past them safely.

In the example below, only one team member can fire safely to the front and all other team members cannot fire to the front without risking shooting team members in front of them. However, in this case all team members can fire safely to the side. This formation therefore has poor firepower to the front and good firepower to the sides.

Vulnerability

In order to gain an advantage in mobility or firepower in one direction, a formation will have to make itself vulnerable to fire from another direction. Enfilade fire is when the trajectory of fire is aligned and parallel with the long axis of a formation. This is the most lethal orientation of fire for several reasons. The more linear a formation is, the more vulnerable it will be to enfilade fire along its long axis. This is because as a bullet passes through the formation, it will have a greater chance of hitting someone if the entire team is in a line. A single bullet can also pass through two people. Enfilade fire also makes the shooter's job easier, since he/she can target the entire formation without having to traverse the weapon to the left or right. . The image below shows an example of enfilade fire. For all these reasons, formations that are more linear are particularly vulnerable to fire from certain angles.

While more linear formations are particularly vulnerable to enfilade fire that passes through their long axis, they are less vulnerable to fire that is perpendicular to the long axis for several reasons. Each incoming bullet has less chances of hitting and if it does hit someone, it will pass through the formation and not hit anyone else. It is more difficult for the shooter to engage multiple targets since he/she will have to traverse left and right to engage each target. The picture below shows an example of this.

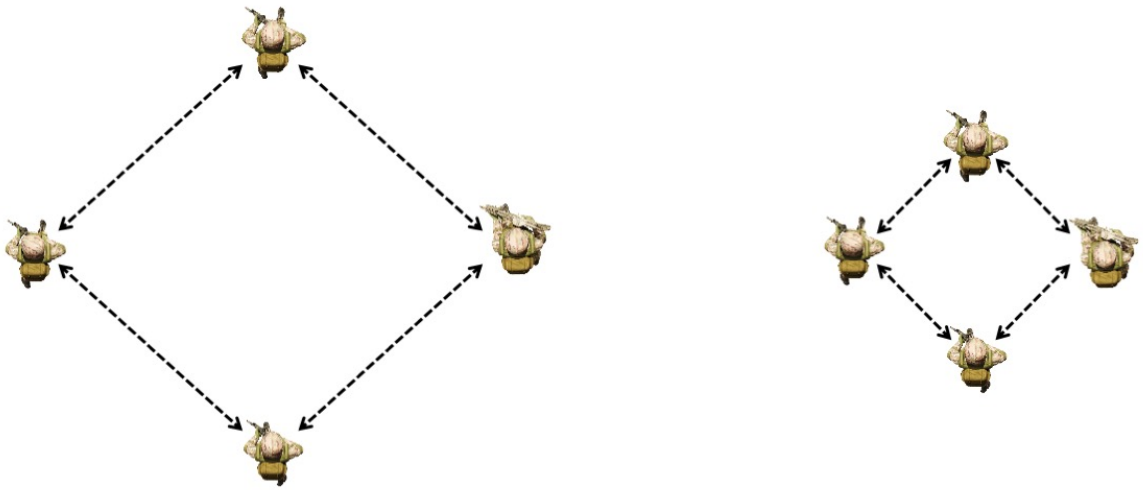


Wide Spacing vs. Tight Spacing

Another critical question to consider when it comes to tactical formations is spacing. While in some cases, doctrine provides specific prescriptions on exactly how far apart troops should be, this is generally not the best approach. It works better to naturally spread out and contract the formation based on the terrain and the situation. There are advantages and disadvantages to wider spacing and tighter spacing. The ideal amount of spacing between troops depends on the terrain and the situation.

In most combat situations, wider spacing is preferable because it reduces the vulnerability for the formation. One burst of fire or explosion is less likely to kill two team members. As a rule of thumb, spreading out with at least 5-10 meters between troops offers significantly reduced vulnerability. However, in dense vegetation or limited visibility conditions, wide spacing can make controlling the formation very difficult and increase the chances of leaving a team member behind, especially if someone is injured under fire.

Tight spacing increases vulnerability to enemy fire and explosions but also increases speed and control. When speeding up or moving through dense terrain, a unit might momentarily tighten its formation to increase control and make movement easier. The unit can then spread out again once the terrain opens up. One important point to remember is that in some types of terrain (like tall grass) the formation might be able to see each other standing up, but as soon as they take fire and have to go prone, they will completely lose visual contact. In these situations, slightly tighter spacing might be necessary. The image below shows an example of wide spacing vs. tight spacing.



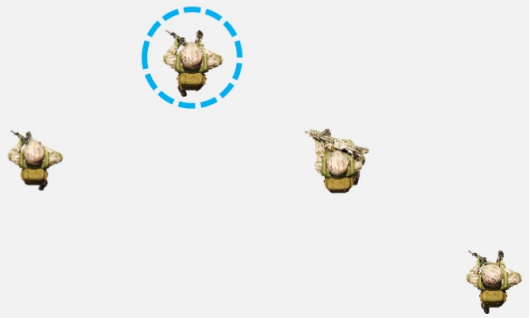
Leader Positioning

Another important question relating to formations is where in the formation the leader should position himself/herself. Of course the leader's position does not need to be fixed and he/she can move around as necessary based on the situation. The two most common options for leader positioning are in the front of the formation and in the center of the formation.

Positioning in the front of the formation allows the leader to "lead from the front," motivate subordinates and set the pace of the advance. This method is often preferable when subordinates are less experienced and need more direction. However, positioning in the front also makes the leader more vulnerable and makes it more difficult for him/her to control the formation.

When the leader is in a more central location this allows the leader to easily see and control the team without turning his/her head all the way around. It also reduces risk for the leader since the lead person (point man) in the formation is frequently in greater danger. The central position is generally preferable for more experienced units where subordinates can be trusted in the lead position. The diagrams below compare the advantages and disadvantages of front and central positioning and give examples in a team formation.

LEADER IN THE FRONT/LEAD



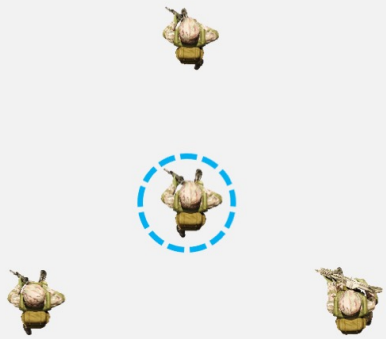
ADVANTAGES

- More motivation/direction of subordinates
- Leader can execute changes in direction quickly
- Leader has better visibility to the front

DISADVANTAGES

- Leader has to turn around to see subordinates
- Difficult for leader to both lead and act as point man
- Leader more exposed to threats from the front

LEADER IN A CENTRAL POSITION



ADVANTAGES

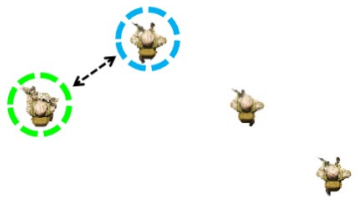
- Leader in central command/control position
- Leader can focus on leading while point man can focus entirely on watching out for threats
- Leader less exposed to threats from the front

DISADVANTAGES

- Leader less able to lead by example
- Leader has less visibility to the front and may have to move forward to get eyes on a threat
- Requires a mature, highly-trained point man

Another advantage of placing the leader in a central position and not at the head of the formation is that it allows the lead person in the formation (the pointman) to focus completely on looking for threats. When done correctly, being a pointman is a very demanding, fulltime job. Leading the formation is also a demanding job. If the leader is also responsible for navigation, map checks and/or compass checks, it can be dangerous for the leader to take out a map or compass when leading the formation. Ideally, the pointman should not be looking down at a map but rather watching the terrain ahead, staying alert for boobytraps, hazards and nearby enemies.

There are some other special cases and consideration when it comes to leader positioning. One factor is the leader's proximity to the machine gun or heavy weapon. In some cases, the leader will want to move closer to a heavy weapon in order to direct or control its fire. Another scenario involves the leader placing himself/herself on the edge of a formation in order to provide a coordination point with another unit. Finally, in cases when accountability is particularly important, the leader may want to position in the back of a formation to be able to carefully watch all members of the unit. In cases when a unit has a "second in command" or 2IC, it can be a good idea for the 2IC to position in the rear to monitor troops while the leader moves to the best location to fight the enemy. The diagram below gives some examples of these special cases just described.

PROXIMITY TO GUNNER OR OTHER HEAVY WEAPON	
	It can be helpful for the team leader to remain close to the gunner, so the team leader can immediately provide fire commands to the gunner in the event of enemy contact. This will sometimes call for the team leader to form a buddy team with the gunner.
LEFT/RIGHT COORDINATION POINT	
	In some cases, the team leader might want to position on the extreme left or right of the formation. This is useful when the leader needs to act as a coordination point with units on the left or right.
REAR POSITIONING FOR ACCOUNTABILITY	
	While this is generally not preferable, if there is a very high risk of losing accountability of subordinates, the team leader might want to position in the rear to be able to see and monitor all subordinates at once.

TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Team Formations

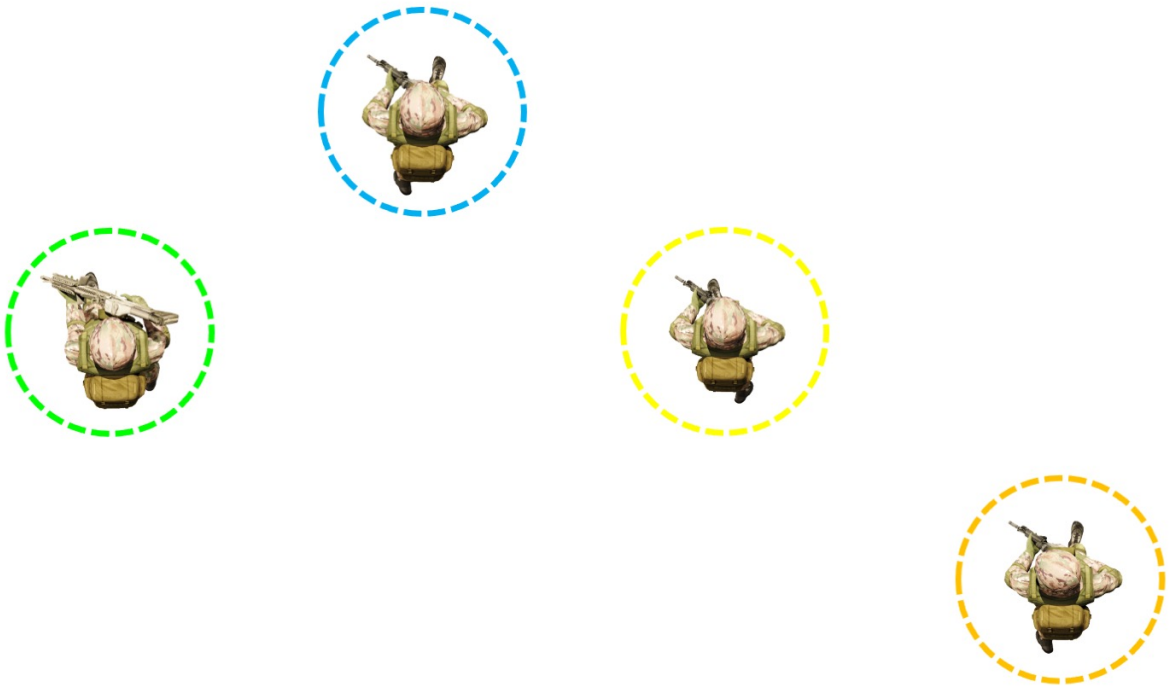
Team-level formations dictate how individual team members position themselves in relation to each other. This chapter covers eight different formations, all of which are incorporated into U.S. Military doctrine by either the Army, Marine Corps or Special Operations Forces. Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each formation is a critical first step to understanding how to move tactically and defeat the enemy in combat. The eight formations covered in this chapter are depicted in the diagram below.

WEDGE (HEAVY RIGHT/LEFT)	DIAMOND	MODIFIED DIAMOND (ARROWHEAD)	SINGLE-FILE
STAGGERED FILE	ON-LINE	STAGGERED LINE	ECHELON

TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Right) – General Description

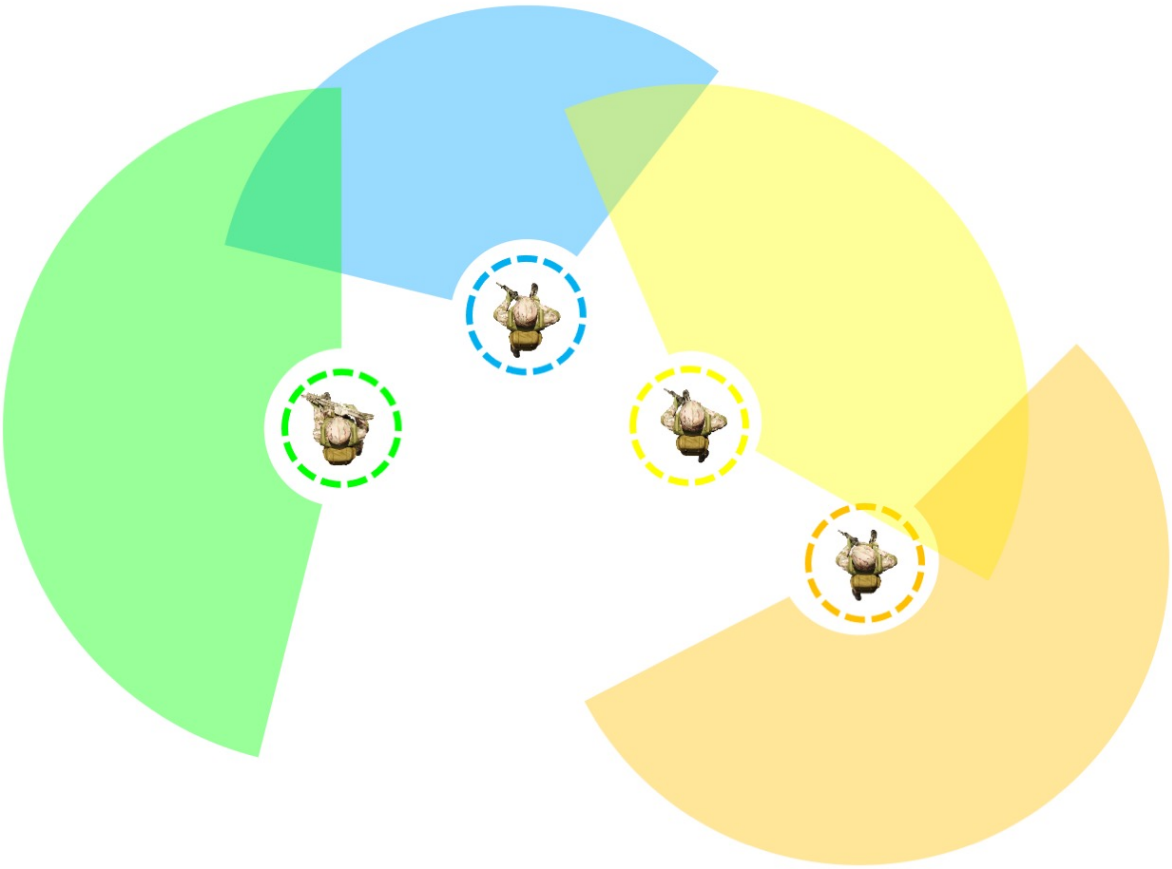
The wedge (or heavy right/left) offers good mobility and control while still allowing rapid massing of firepower to the front. The wedge does not provide an ideal "central location" for the team leader so when moving in a wedge it is generally best for the team leader to lead. As already discussed, putting the team leader in the front of the formation offers both advantages and disadvantages. Apart from the team-leader being in the front, the positions of the other team members can vary. However, if you divide a four-person team into buddy teams, it makes sense for the team leader to be buddied with the heavy weapon (light machine gun) as shown in the picture below. This means putting the machine gun on the "light" side of the formation, which would be to the left in the picture below. It is also important to note that the team member on the end of the heavy side is somewhat isolated and might be left behind in stressful situations.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Right) – Sectors of Fire

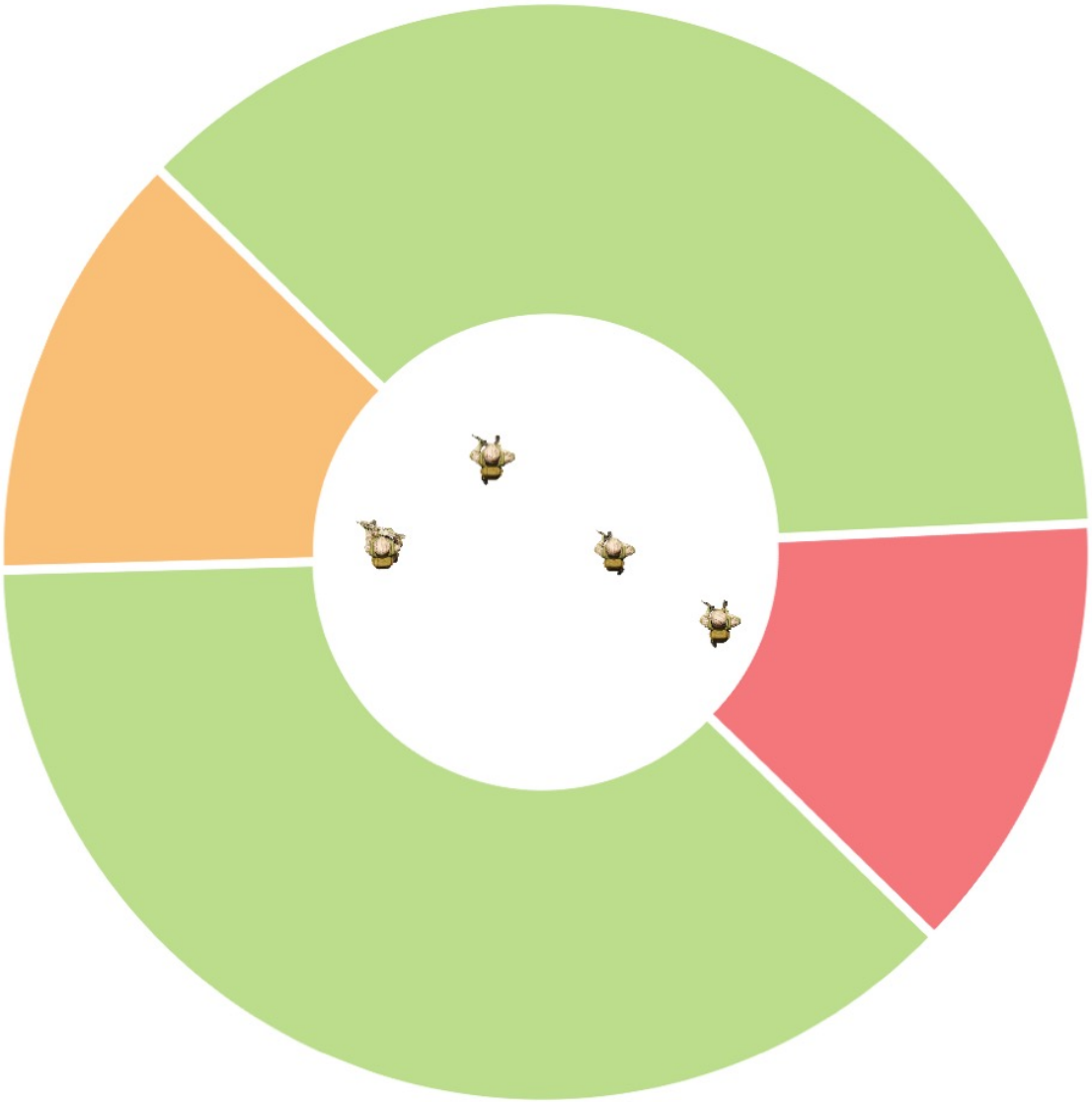
The sectors of fire in the wedge formation are fairly logical. The sectors below are generalized and can vary based on the situation. It is also important to remember that the sectors show where each team member is responsible for covering, not necessarily the limits of where they are able to shoot. For example, while the person on the far right rear of the formation is primarily responsible for rear security, he/she can still fire to the front if needed.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Right) – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

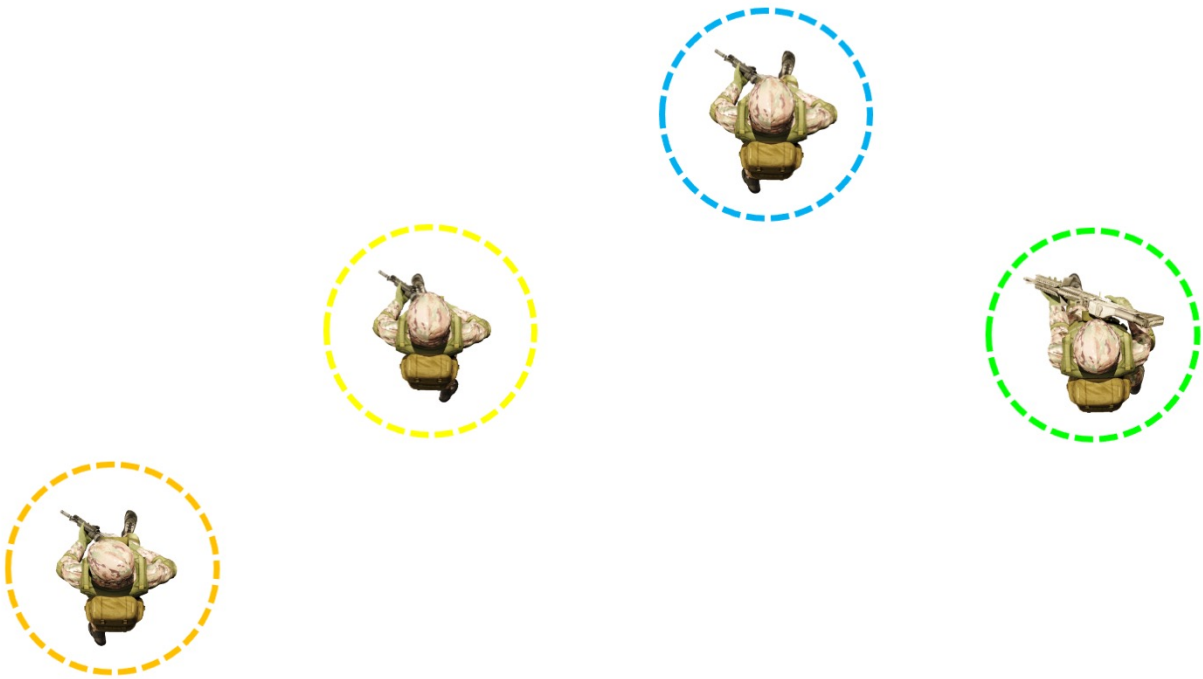
The wedge provides fairly balanced firepower in all directions. All troops can fire to the front and are spread out well to keep an enemy to the front from achieving enfilade fire on the formation. At least two weapons can fire to the front left, one of which is generally the light machine gun. However, there are some angles to the right-rear that only one weapon can engage without turning or adjusting the formation.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Left) – General Description

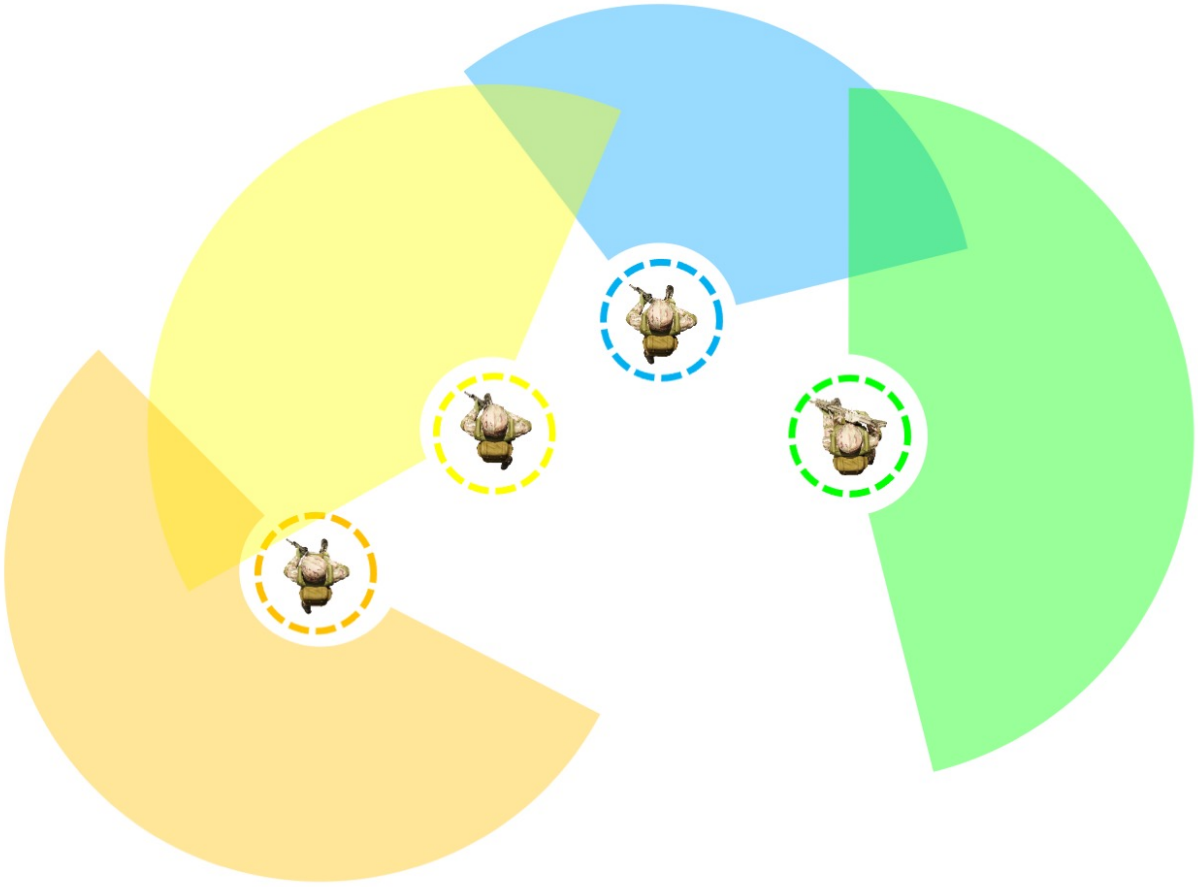
The general considerations for the heavy left formation are the same as for the heavy right formation. The wedge offers good mobility and control while still allowing rapid massing of firepower to the front. The wedge does not provide an ideal "central location" for the team leader so when moving in a wedge it is generally best for the team leader to lead. As already discussed, putting the team leader in the front of the formation offers both advantages and disadvantages. Apart from the team-leader being in the front, the positions of the other team members can vary. However, if you divide a four-person team into buddy teams, it makes sense for the team leader to be buddied with the heavy weapon (light machine gun) as shown in the picture below. This means putting the machine gun on the "light" side of the formation, which would be to the right in the picture below. It is also important to note that the team member on the end of the heavy side is somewhat isolated and might be left behind in stressful situations.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Left) – Sectors of Fire

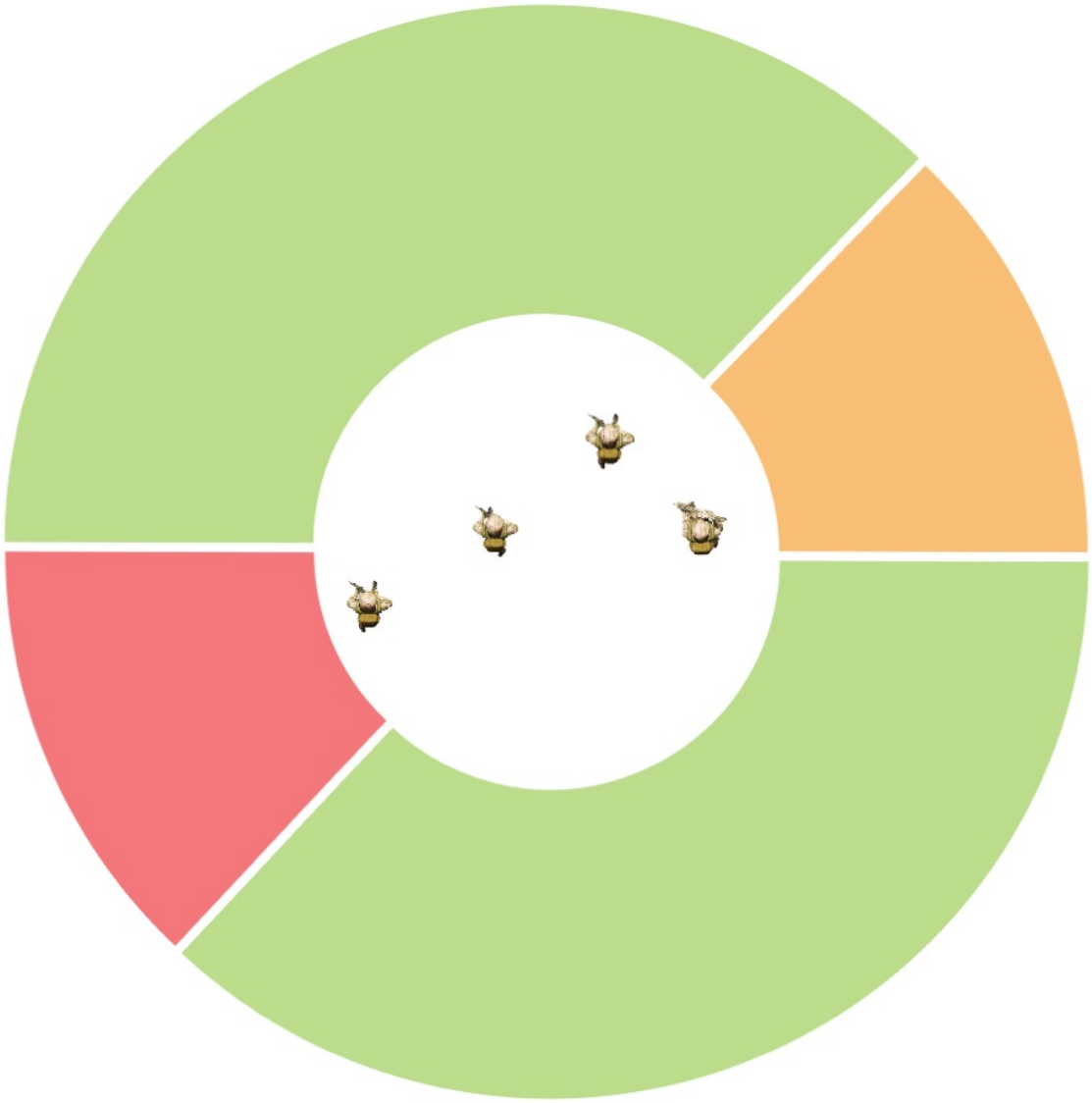
The sectors of fire for the heavy left formation are the reverse of the heavy right formation. It is important to note that while the rear person in the formation can be a "free floater" and move back and fourth to assume either heavy left or heavy right positions, this is generally not preferable since it can confuse other formation members and will throw off buddy team assignments within the team. The sectors below are generalized and can vary based on the situation. It is also important to remember that the sectors show where each team member is responsible for covering, not necessarily the limits of where they are able to shoot. For example, while the person on the far left rear of the formation is primarily responsible for rear security, he/she can still fire to the front if needed.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge (Heavy Left) – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

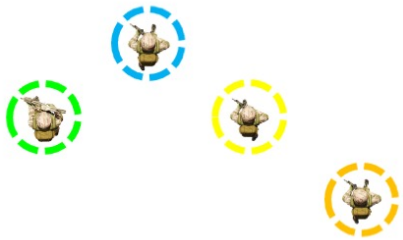
Firepower vs. vulnerability of the heavy left are the reverse of the heavy right. The wedge provides fairly balanced firepower in all directions. All troops can fire to the front and are spread out well to keep an enemy to the front from achieving enfilade fire on the formation. At least two weapons can fire to the front right, one of which is generally the light machine gun. However, there are some angles to the left-rear that only one weapon can engage without turning or adjusting the formation.



TEAM FORMATIONS: WEDGE

Wedge – Different Team Sizes

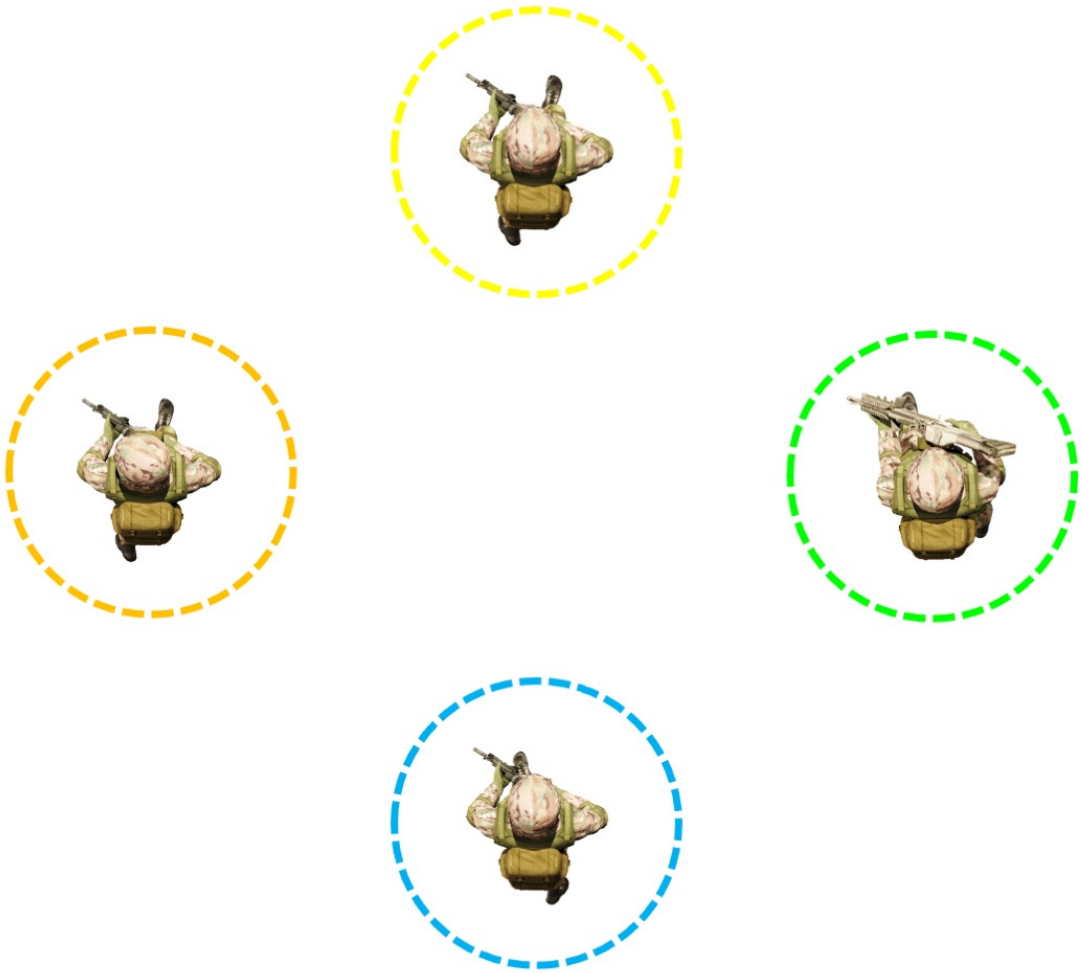
The wedge formation can vary depending on the number of people in the team. When there are three or five people in a team the wedge will no longer be unbalanced so there will no longer be "heavy right" or "heavy left" options. When adding a sixth person to the formation, generally the best option is to move the team leader back to a central position in the middle of the wedge behind the point man. Having more than six people in a wedge formation can make the formation difficult to control and you would probably be better off splitting the element once again into smaller teams. If you must add additional people to the formation they can attach to the wings of the wedge, extending the formation further out.

THREE-PERSON TEAM	FOUR-PERSON TEAM
	
FIVE-PERSON TEAM	**SIX-PERSON TEAM**

TEAM FORMATIONS: DIAMOND

Diamond – General Description

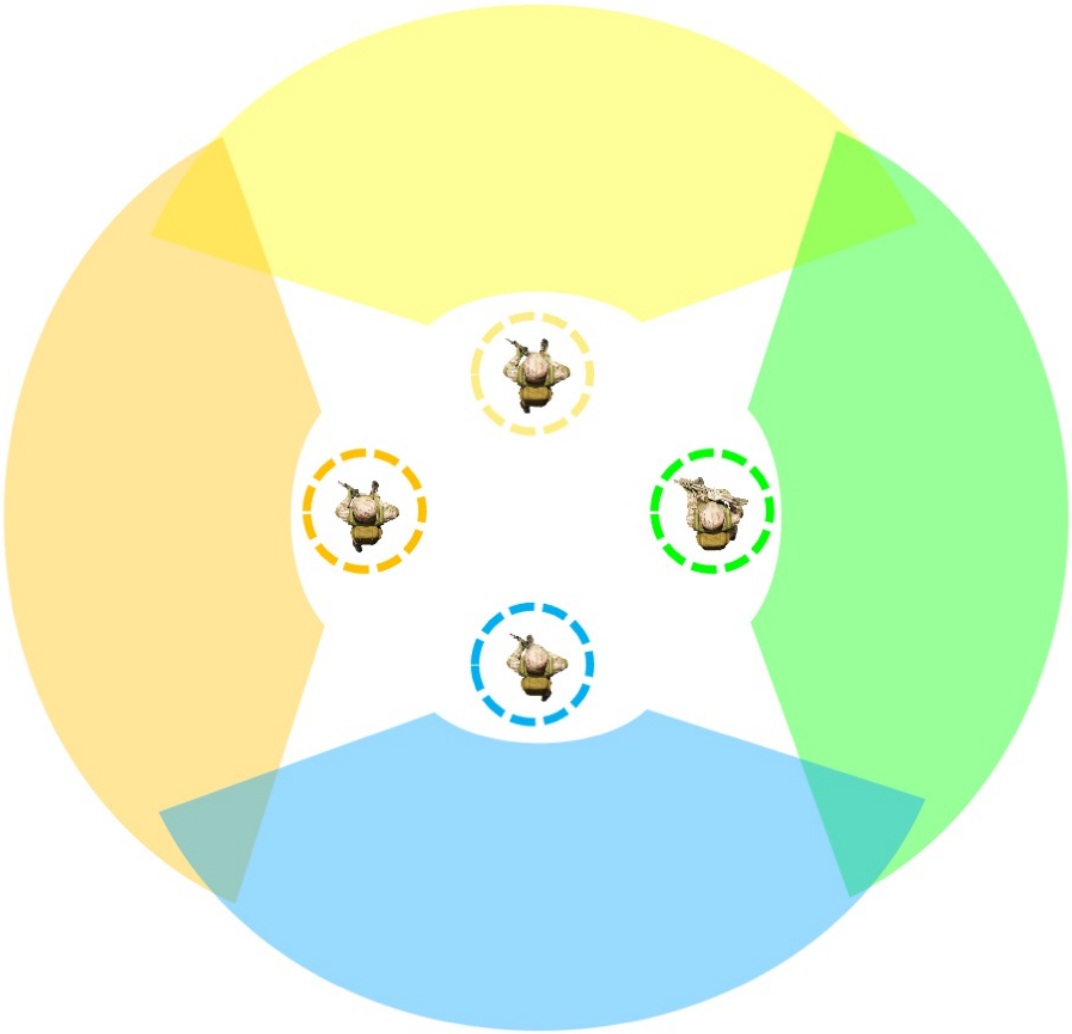
The diamond formation is similar to the wedge but is slightly easier to control while still offering good firepower to the front. In the diamond formation, the fourth person tucks into the rear of the formation, forming a diamond, instead of extending out on the left or right wing of the formation. It is easier for the rear team member to provide rear security in the diamond formation since he/she is in the rear center of the formation and is less likely to get disoriented when glancing backwards, especially at night. The exact positioning of team-members within the formation can vary. In the example below, the team leader is in the rear of the formation but the team leader can also position in the front. In either position, the formation places greater demands on the team leader since he/she will have to double as pointman or rear security.



TEAM FORMATIONS: DIAMOND

Diamond – Sectors of Fire

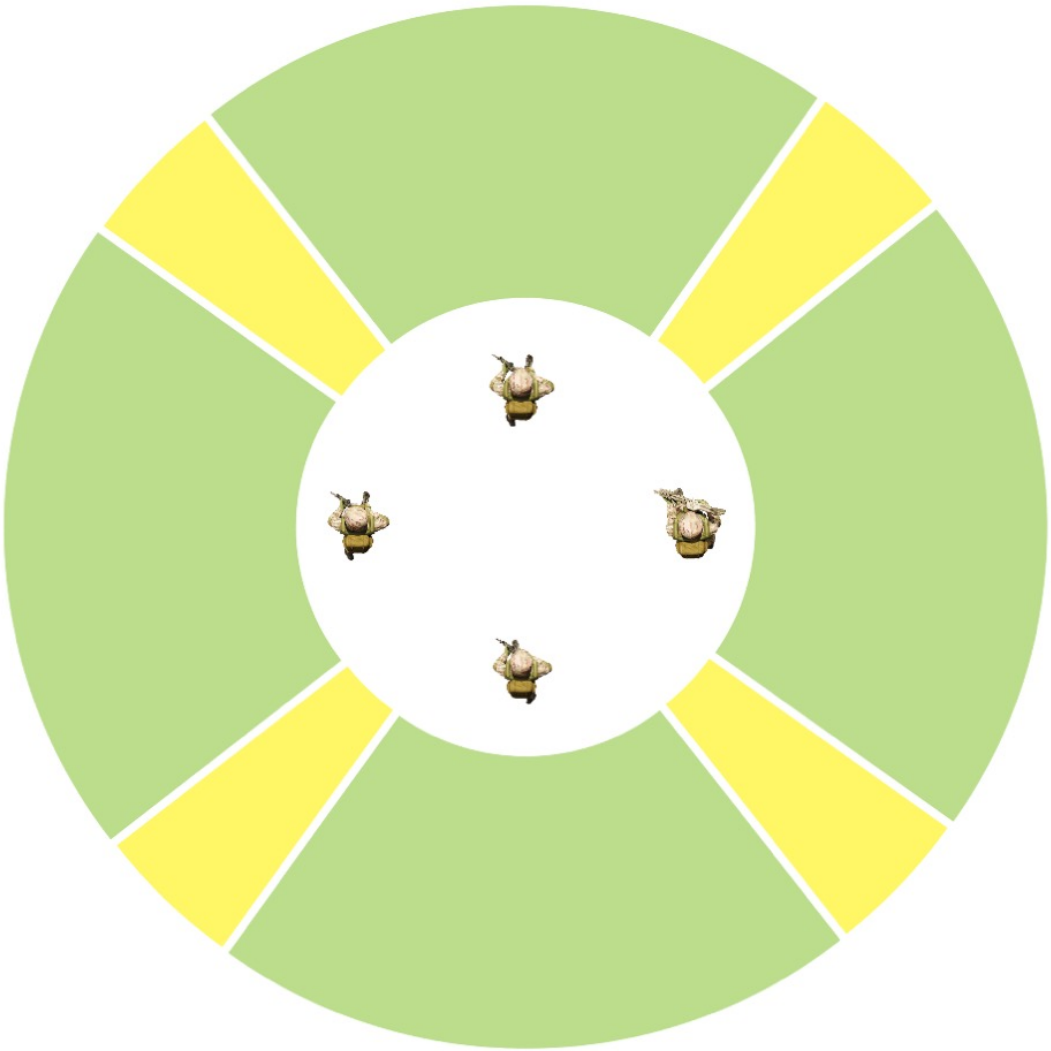
One of the advantages of the diamond formation is that it makes sectors of fire very simple and balanced. Sectors of fire can be easily described as front, rear, left and right. This simplicity makes it less likely that gaps will develop in the 360-security, especially at night or in dense terrain.



TEAM FORMATIONS: DIAMOND

Diamond – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

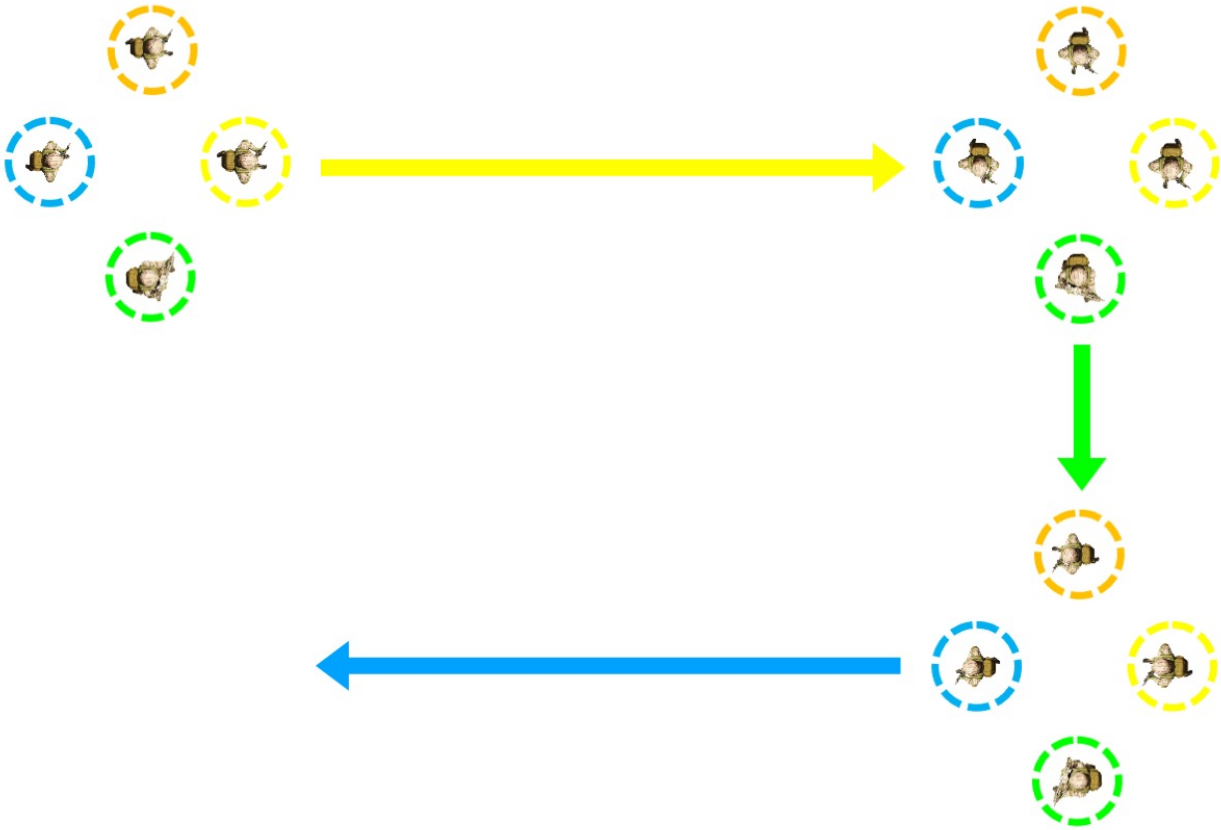
The diamond provides good distribution of firepower in all directions. When firing to the front, rear, left and right, three weapons have clear fields of fire. When firing at an angle to the front-right, front-left, rear-right or rear-left, only two weapons can fire without adjusting the formation. So there are small portions of the 360-degree arc that are slightly more vulnerable. Because the formation is not linear, there is no angle where an enemy can catch the team in true enfilade fire.



TEAM FORMATIONS: DIAMOND

Diamond – Rapid Change of Direction

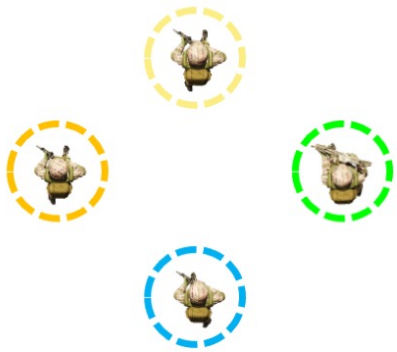
Another advantage of the diamond formation is the ability to rapidly change direction without having to turn the formation. For example, the team can turn 90-degrees to the right by letting the person on the right become the pointman. Not all units might want to do this since it requires shuffling the team members to different positions relative to the direction of travel. However, experienced teams that do not have problems swapping roles can benefit from a symmetrical formation like the diamond.



TEAM FORMATIONS: DIAMOND

Diamond – Different Team Sizes

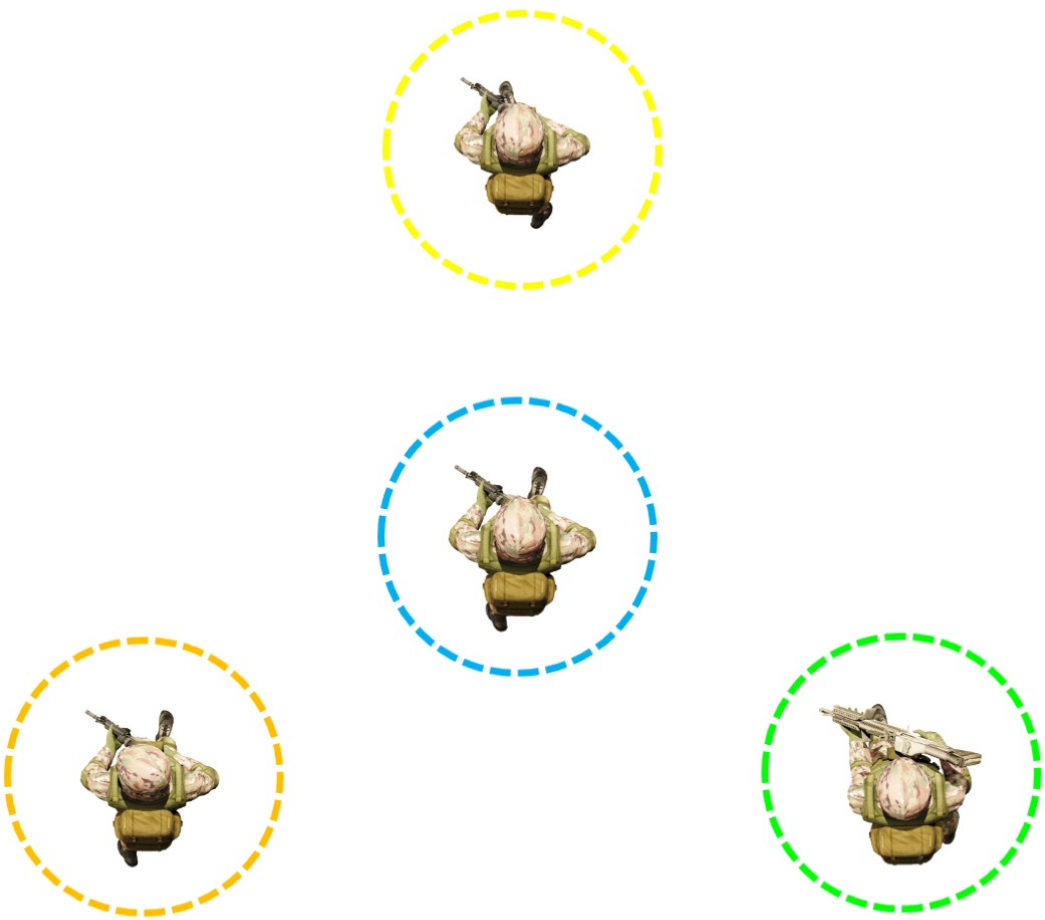
The diamond formation is somewhat less versatile than other formations in terms of the number of people that can be in the formation. It is not possible to form a diamond with less than four people. Adding additional people to the diamond formation can get confusing and negate the advantages of the formation. The one option is adding a fifth person, usually the team leader, to the center of the formation. This gives the diamond formation the added advantage of a central position from which the team leader can control the element.

FOUR-PERSON TEAM	FIVE-PERSON TEAM
	

TEAM FORMATIONS: ARROWHEAD

Arrowhead (Modified Diamond) – General Discussion

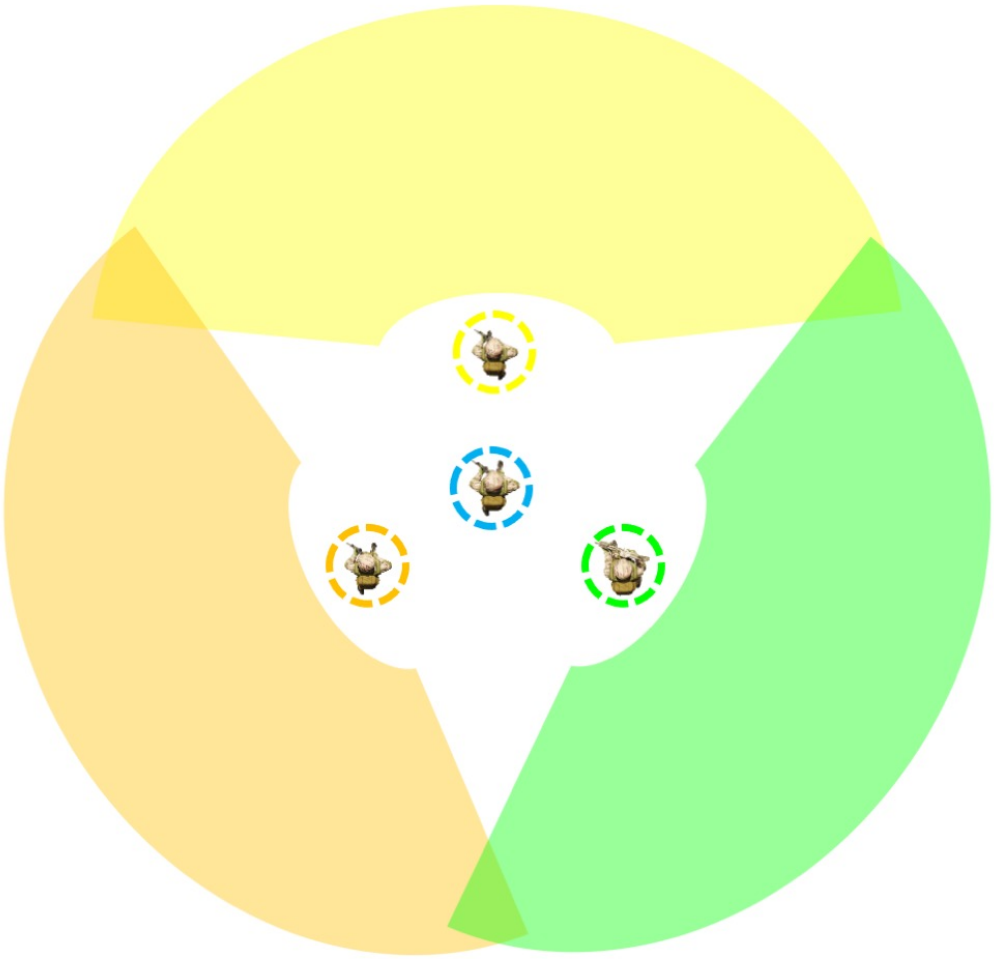
The modified diamond or arrowhead formation combines many of the advantages of the wedge formation and the diamond formation. The formation is easy to control and offers good distribution of fire to all sides. Since, no team member is on the “end” of the formation you are less likely to accidentally leave someone behind. The arrowhead also provides an ideal central location for the team leader and a dedicated point man, which allows the leader to focus on leadership activities and navigation. Generally, the heavy weapons like machine guns or grenade launchers will position on the flanks, to the rear of the team leader.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ARROWHEAD

Arrowhead – Sectors of Fire

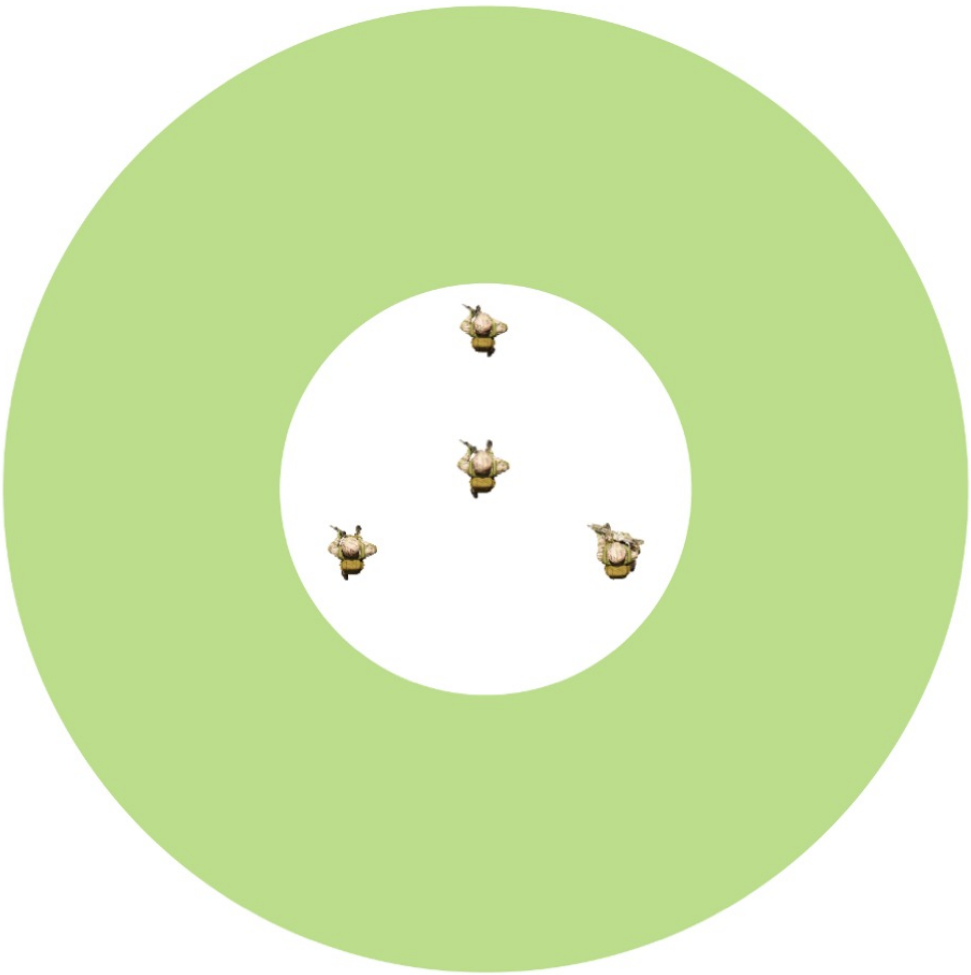
One disadvantage of the arrowhead formation is that because the team leader is in the center of the formation, that means the remaining 3 team members will have to cover larger sectors. Also, since there are two troops evenly spaced in the rear of the formation no position lends itself to an obvious rear security responsibility. You can choose to adjust the sectors and designate one of the flankers as a dedicated rear security or you can have both flankers cover the rear on their respective sides.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ARROWHEAD

Arrowhead – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

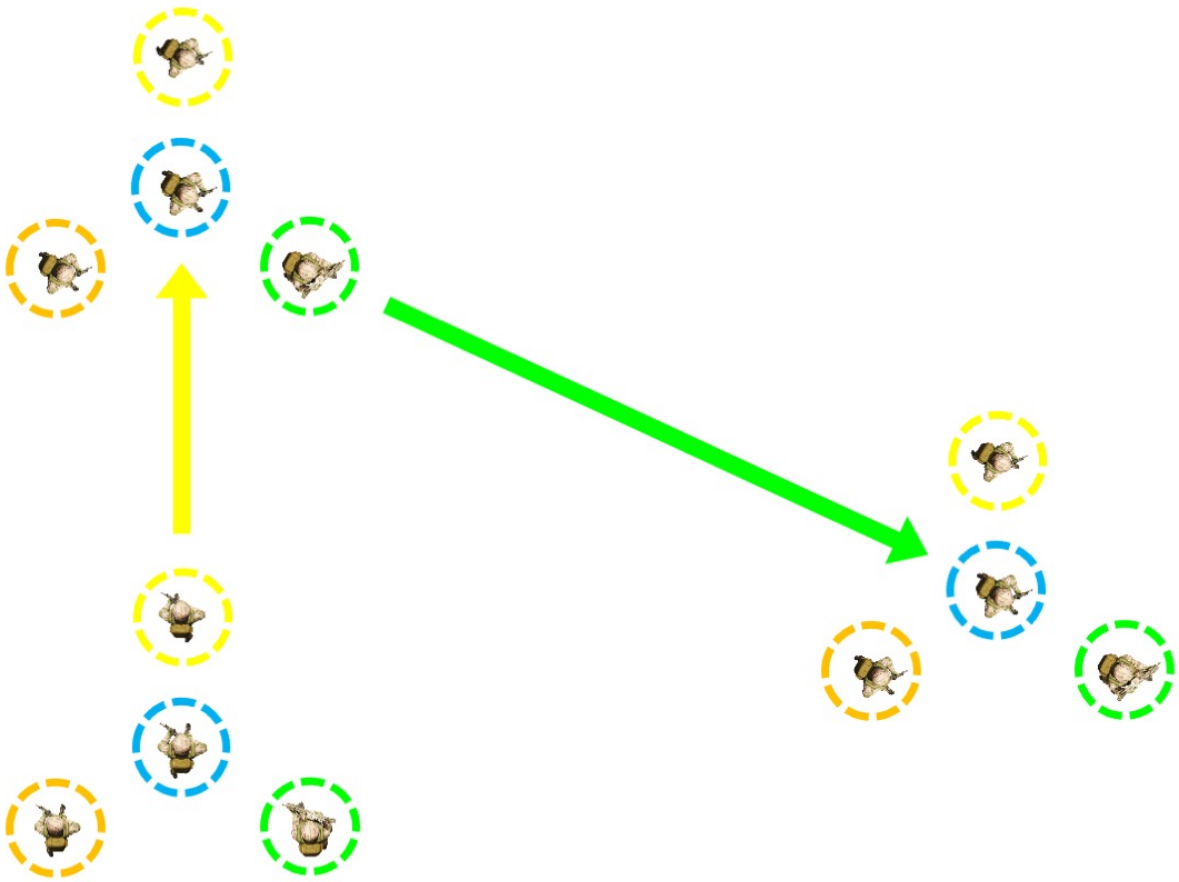
Equal distribution of fire in all directions makes this formation a good choice when an attack might come from any angle. There is no angle where at least three guns cannot fire simultaneously. However, while the arrowhead provides balanced firepower in all directions, you cannot mass all firepower in any single direction without adjusting formation. Adjusting the formation is fairly easy since the person opposite the direction of fire only needs to move a few steps and position next to the team leader.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ARROWHEAD

Arrowhead – Rapid Change of Direction

Like the diamond, the arrowhead formation has the ability to rapidly change direction without having to turn the formation. For example, the team can rapidly turn to the right by letting the person on the right become the pointman. Not all units might want to do this since it requires shuffling the team members to different positions relative to the direction of travel. However, experienced teams that do not have problems swapping roles can benefit from a symmetrical formation like the arrowhead.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ARROWHEAD

Arrowhead – Different Team Sizes

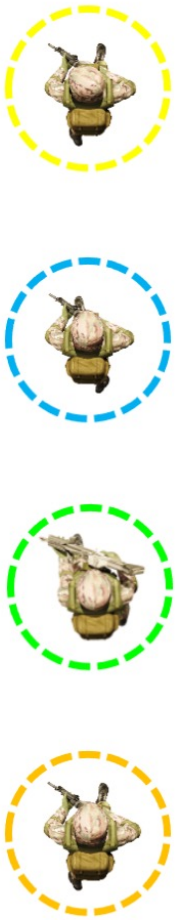
The arrowhead offers some useful possible arrangement possibilities with later teams. You need at least four people in the team to form the arrowhead. With a five-person team, the best option is essentially to use the same five-person configuration as the diamond formation, though you can push the right and left side team members back slightly if that offers better control. With six or seven people the best option is to augment the pointman and employ a two-person point team. Since the job of pointman is so taxing, having two people on point can prove very effective if they are properly trained and know how to work together.

FOUR-PERSON TEAM	FIVE-PERSON TEAM
SIX-PERSON TEAM	**SEVEN-PERSON TEAM**

TEAM FORMATIONS: SINGLE-FILE

Single-File – General Description

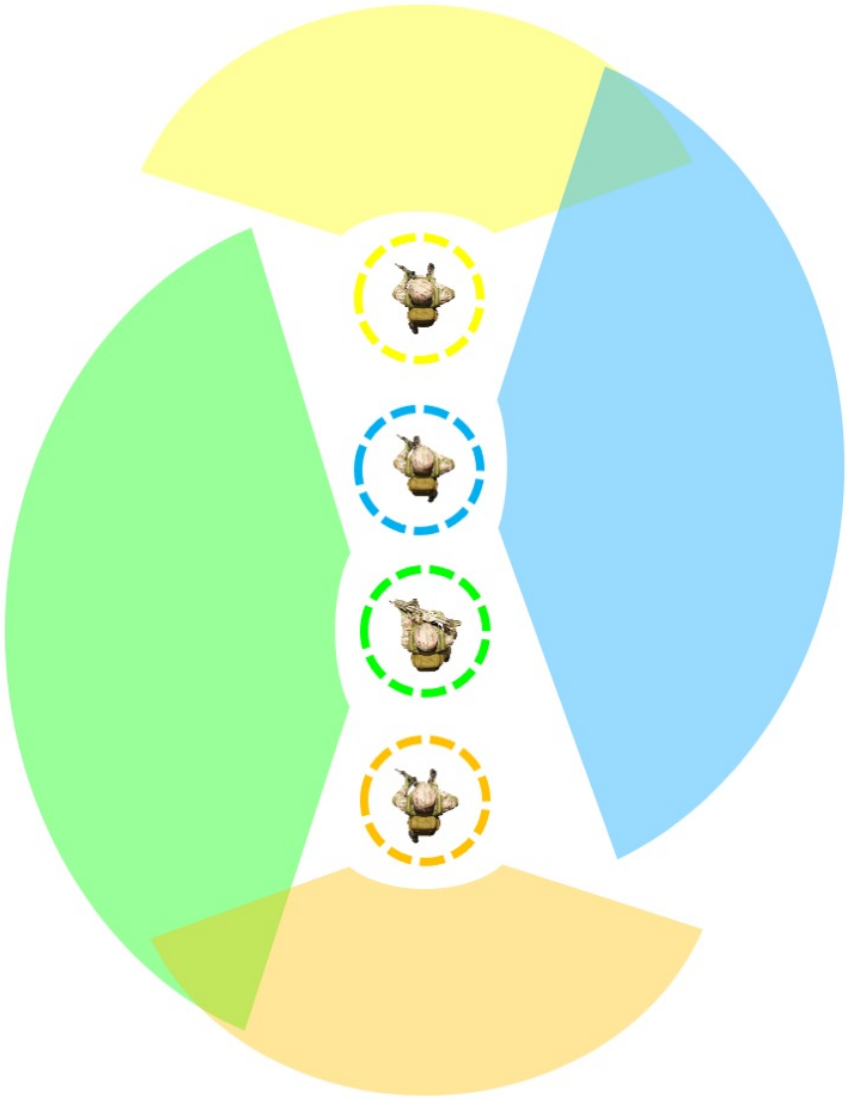
The single-file formation is one of the simplest formations you can use for movement, especially at night, since all each person has to do is follow the person in front of them. However, the single-file is very vulnerable from the front and rear and is therefore not ideal as a fighting formation. The exception to this is that the file allows rapid massing of fire to the sides/flanks since the team member can all turn 90-degrees to the left or right and all fire in the same direction. It is easy for the trail team member to get left behind in the dark, however, the file also makes it easier to quickly take headcounts. The single file formation is most appropriate in very dense terrain when there might only be one movement path and not enough room for troops to move forward side-by-side. An example of this is a thick jungle where you have to cut your own path. There is a fair degree of flexibility in how team members can position themselves in the file. The team leader can position in the front, rear or a central position based on the situation.



TEAM FORMATIONS: SINGLE-FILE

Single-File – Sectors of Fire

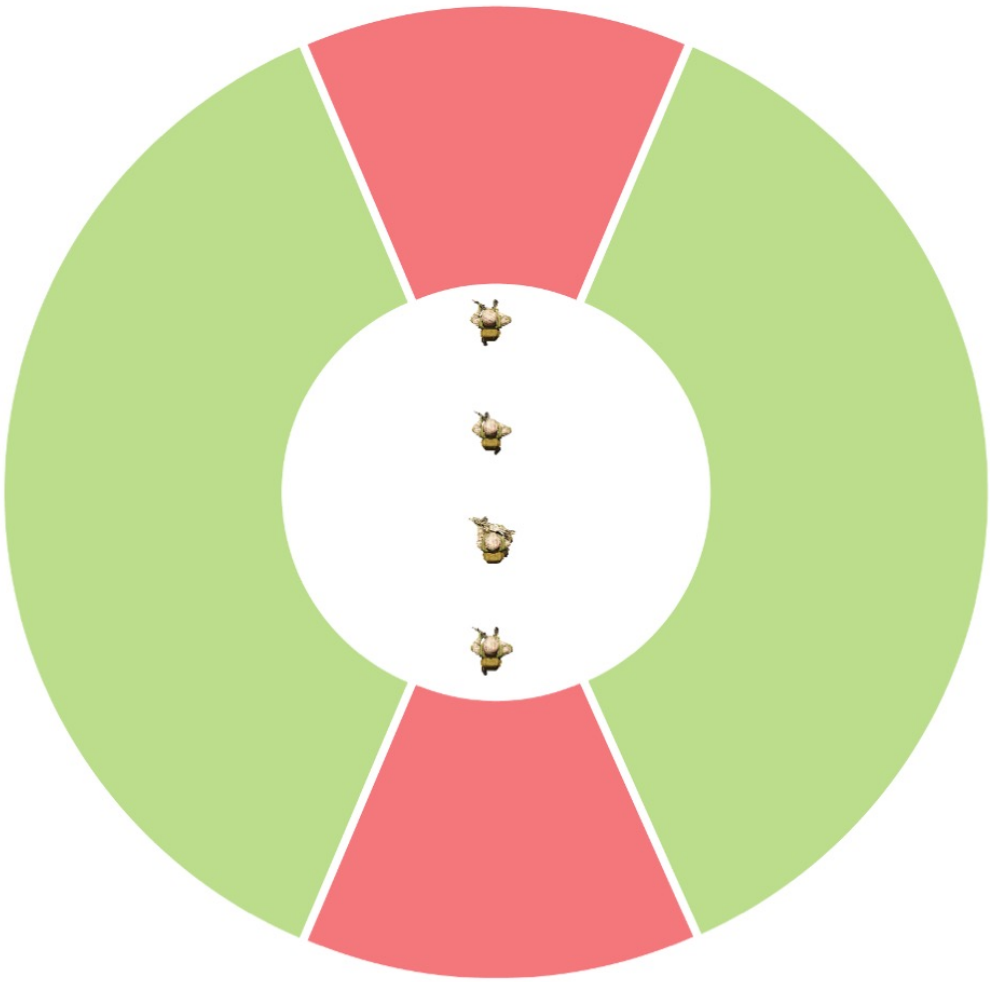
Troops moving in a file distribute their fire in four directions to cover 360-degree security. The team members in the front and back cover those directions respectively. The remaining team members in the center of the formation alternate covering to the right and left.



TEAM FORMATIONS: SINGLE-FILE

Single-File – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

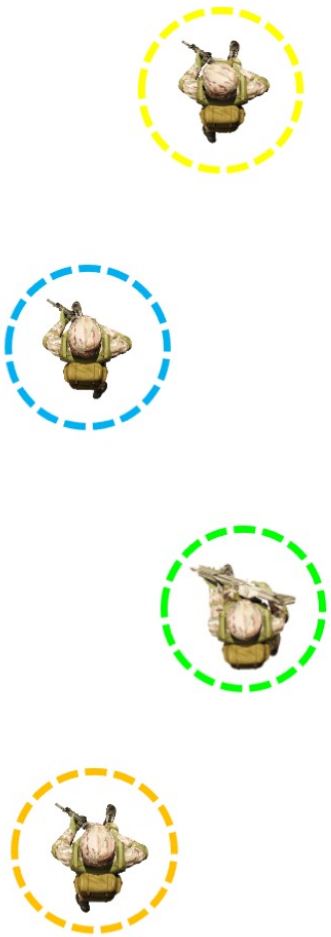
The single-file formation is extremely vulnerable to fire from the direct front and rear and has little ability to return fire in those directions. It is very easy for an enemy machinegun to the front or rear to achieve enfilade fire and send bullets ripping straight through the long axis of the formation. However, the formation is less vulnerable from the sides/flanks and has excellent firepower in those directions.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-FILE

Staggered File – General Description

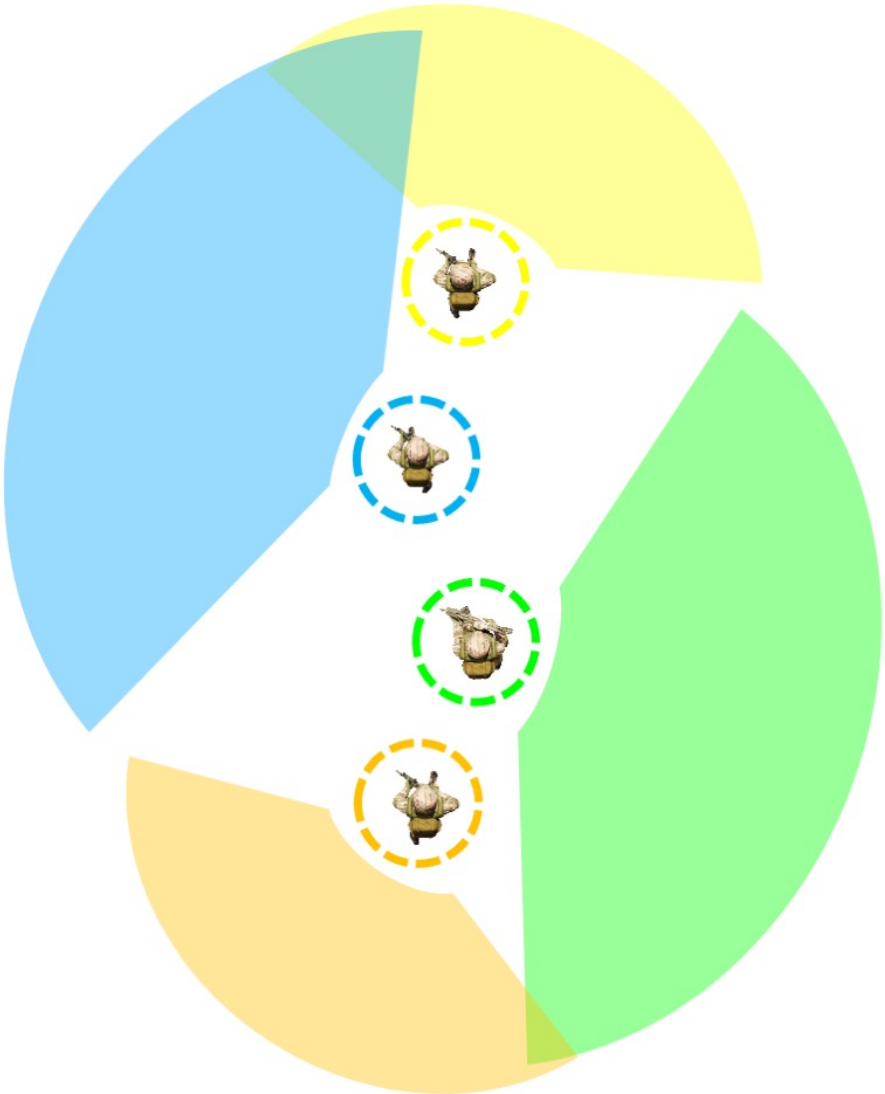
The staggered file has many of the same advantages of the single-file but mitigates some of the single-file formation's vulnerabilities. It is still very easy to move in the staggered file but the formation offers a bit better firepower to the front and rear and is less vulnerable to enfilade fire. The formation can stagger to either side and team members have flexible options for how to position themselves within the formation. The team leader can position in the front, center or rear based on the situation. The staggered file is a good option for quick movement in dense terrain but if the terrain is extremely dense, there might not be enough room to stagger the file and the single-file will be the only option.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-FILE

Staggered File – Sectors of Fire

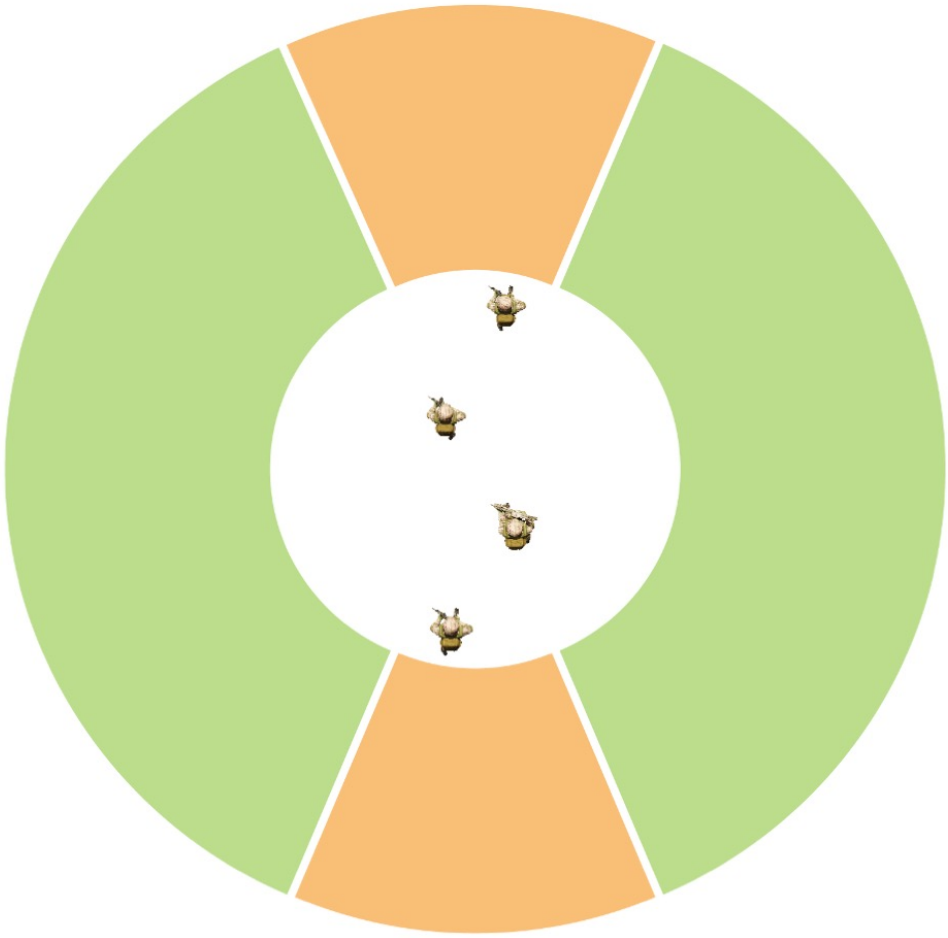
The sectors of fire in the staggered file are essentially the same as the single-file but the stagger makes it easier for team members to identify their sectors. Except for those in the front and rear, the team members staggered to the left cover left and the team members staggered to the right cover right. The stagger also allows two people to fire to the front and rear.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-FILE

Staggered File – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

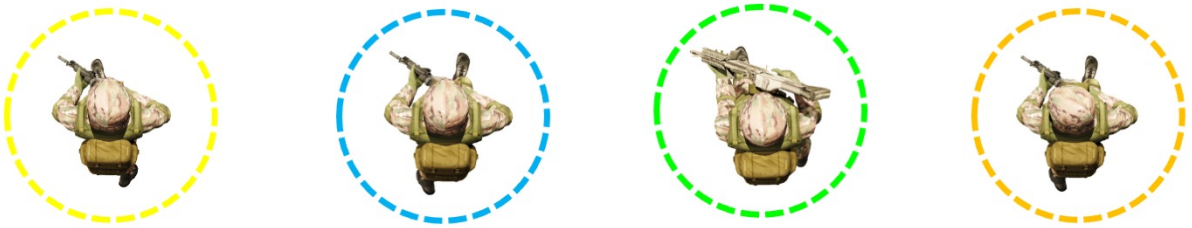
Like the single-file, the staggered file is vulnerable to fire from the front and rear, however it is slightly less vulnerable since the troops are more spread out laterally, making it more difficult for an enemy machine gun to achieve enfilade fire. The staggered file has excellent firepower to the sides/flanks.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ON-LINE

On-Line – General Description

The line makes massing firepower to the front the easiest since all team members can fire forward with full fields of fire. Because it is difficult to maintain the line while moving, the formation can be slow and difficult to control, especially at night or in rough terrain. For this reason it is generally best to use another formation while moving, then shift to the line once the team is stationary and prepared to return fire. The team leader will generally position near the center of the line to best control fire on either side. However, as discussed earlier, in some situations the team leader might want to position on the extreme right or extreme left of the line to act as a coordination point with another unit to the left or right.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ON-LINE

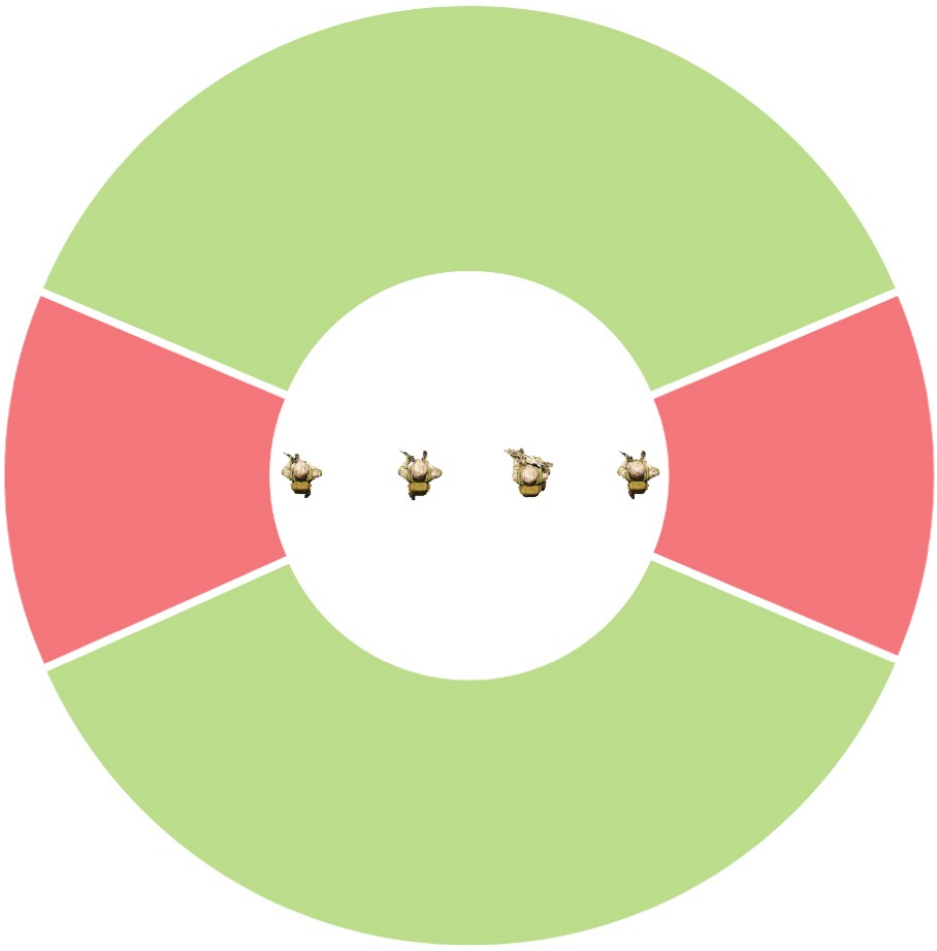
On-Line – Sectors of Fire

Because the line formation is intended to mass firepower to the front, it offers less security to the sides and rear. The troops on the extreme left and right of the formation will generally cover to the left and right. You can either designate one of them to also watch the rear or you can have both of them watch the rear on their respective sides.

TEAM FORMATIONS: ON-LINE

On-Line – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

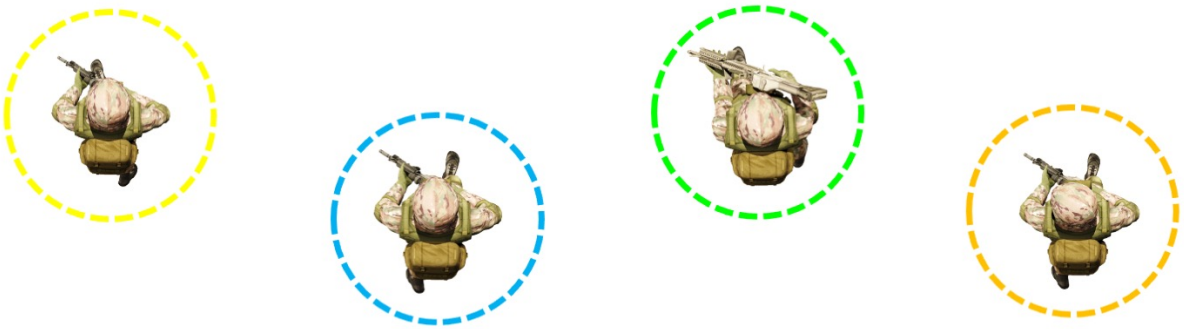
The line formation is designed to mass firepower to the front. It is also relatively easy for the individual team members to pivot 180-degrees to mass firepower in the opposite direction. However, the formation is extremely vulnerable to fire from the sides/flanks and has little ability to return fire in those directions.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-LINE

Staggered Line – General Description

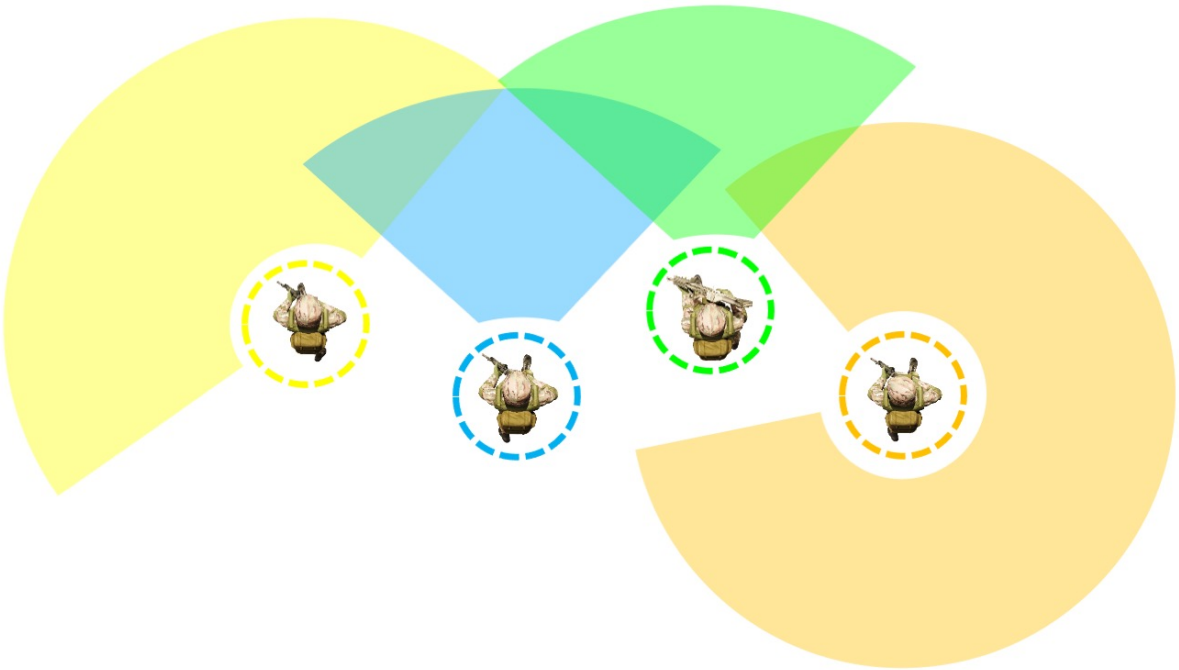
The staggered line offers many of the same advantages of the line formation while reducing vulnerability from the flanks. The staggered line makes massing firepower to the front the easy since all team members can fire forward with nearly full fields of fire. While team members staggered to the rear might have slightly constricted fields of fire, those staggered to the front will have even wider fields of fire. It therefore makes sense to put heavy weapons staggered to the front. Because it is difficult to maintain the line while moving, the formation can be slow and difficult to control, especially at night or in rough terrain. For this reason it is generally best to use another formation while moving, then shift to the line once the team is prepared to stop and return fire. The team leader will generally position in the center of the line and stagger to the rear to be able to see and control the fire of troops to the left and right. However, as discussed earlier, in some situations the team leader might want to position on the extreme right or extreme left of the line to act as a coordination point with another unit.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-LINE

Staggered Line – Sectors of Fire

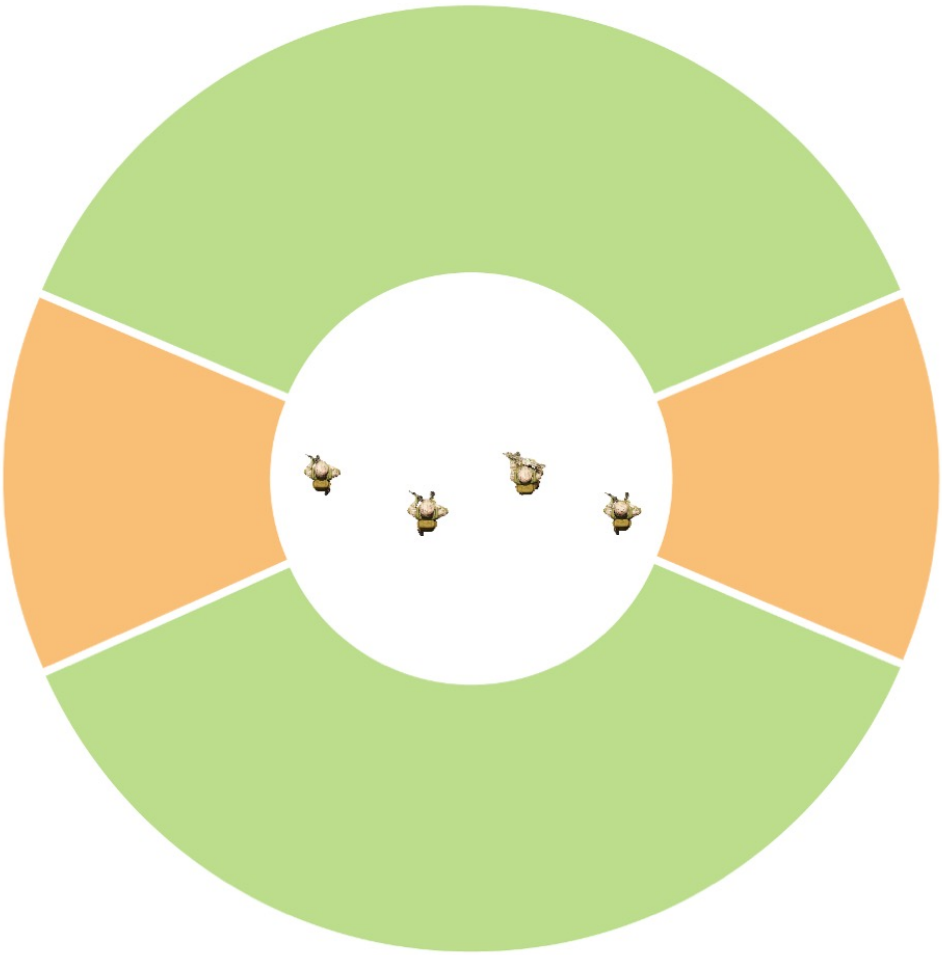
Because the line formation is intended to mass firepower to the front, it offers less security to the sides and rear. The troops on the extreme left and right of the formation will generally cover to the left and right. You can either designate one of them to also watch the rear or you can have both of them watch the rear on their respective sides.



TEAM FORMATIONS: STAGGERED-LINE

Staggered Line – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

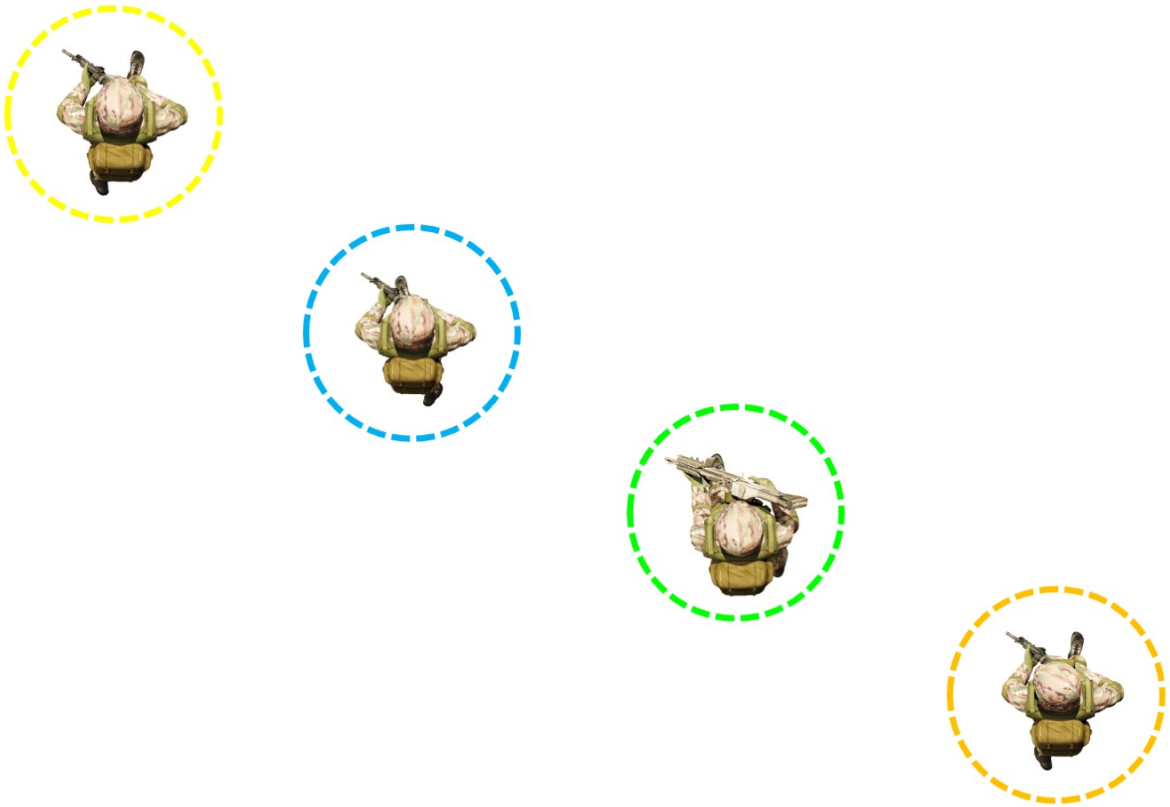
The line formation is designed to mass firepower to the front. It is also relatively easy for the individual team members to pivot 180-degrees to mass firepower in the opposite direction. The staggered line is slightly less vulnerable to the sides and rear than the line and is slightly more able to return fire in those directions.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

Echelon Right – General Discussion

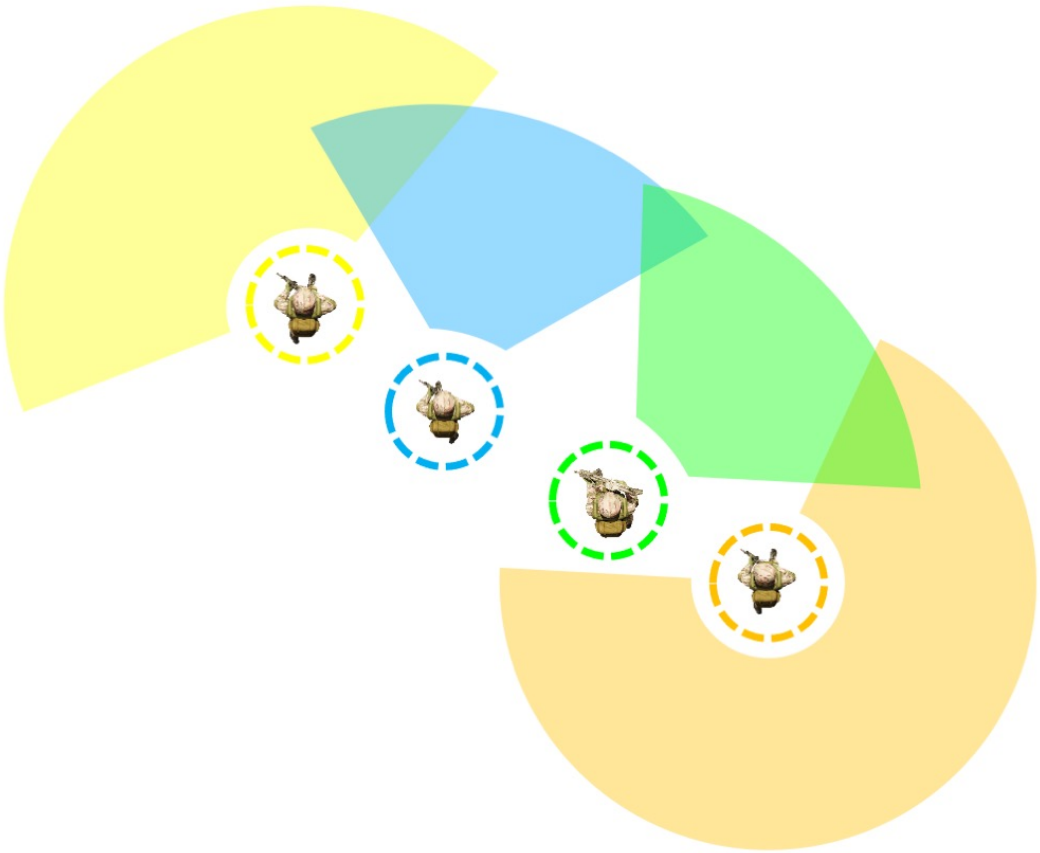
The echelon right makes massing firepower to the front or right easy since all team members can fire in those directions with nearly full fields of fire. It is essentially a hybrid between the line and the file, equally balancing the advantages and disadvantages of each. Because the echelon right is an unbalanced formation, it is generally only useful when you are relatively sure that enemy contact will come from the right. The team leader can position anywhere in the formation based on the situation.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

Echelon Right – Sectors of Fire

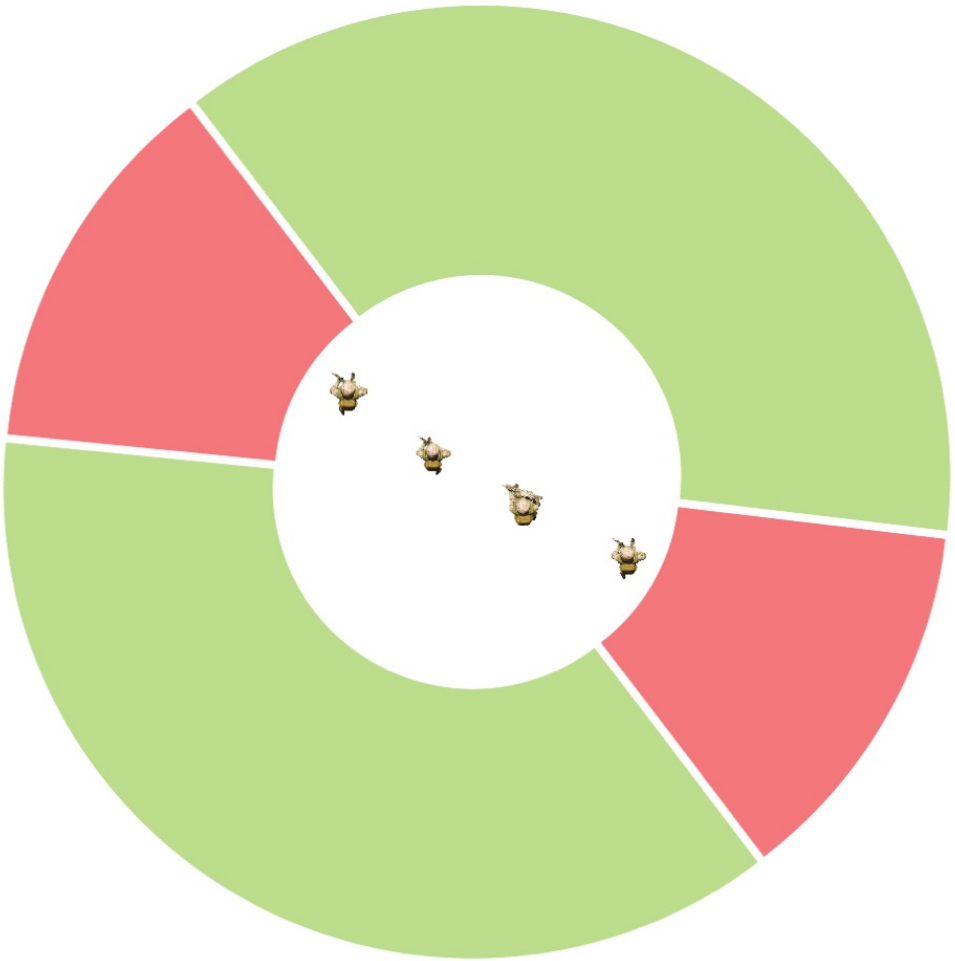
The sectors of fire for the echelon right are similar to those for the line except that the lead person in the formation will also have to cover the left. The rear team member also has a large area to cover. This means that coverage to the front and right is better than coverage to the rear and left.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

Echelon Right – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

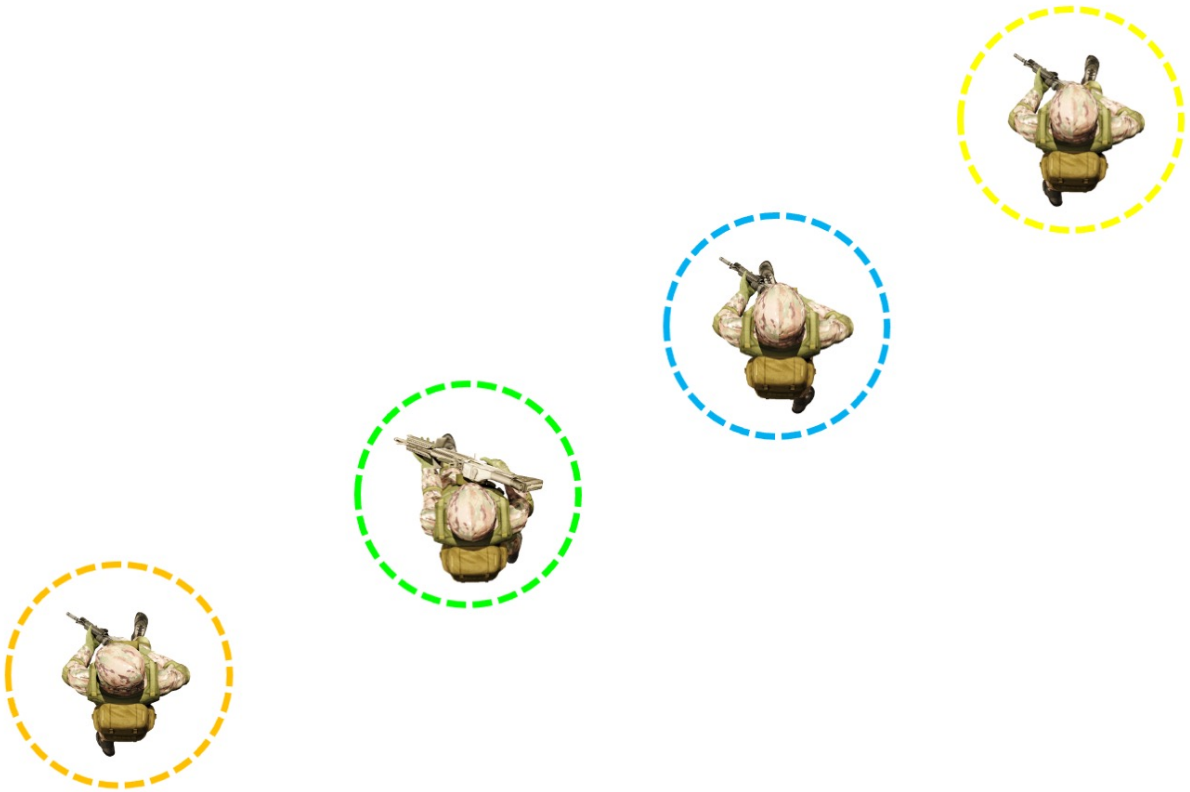
The echelon right formation provides excellent firepower to the front and to the right. The formation is extremely vulnerable to fire from the left/front and right/rear and has little ability to return fire in those directions.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

Echelon Left – General Discussion

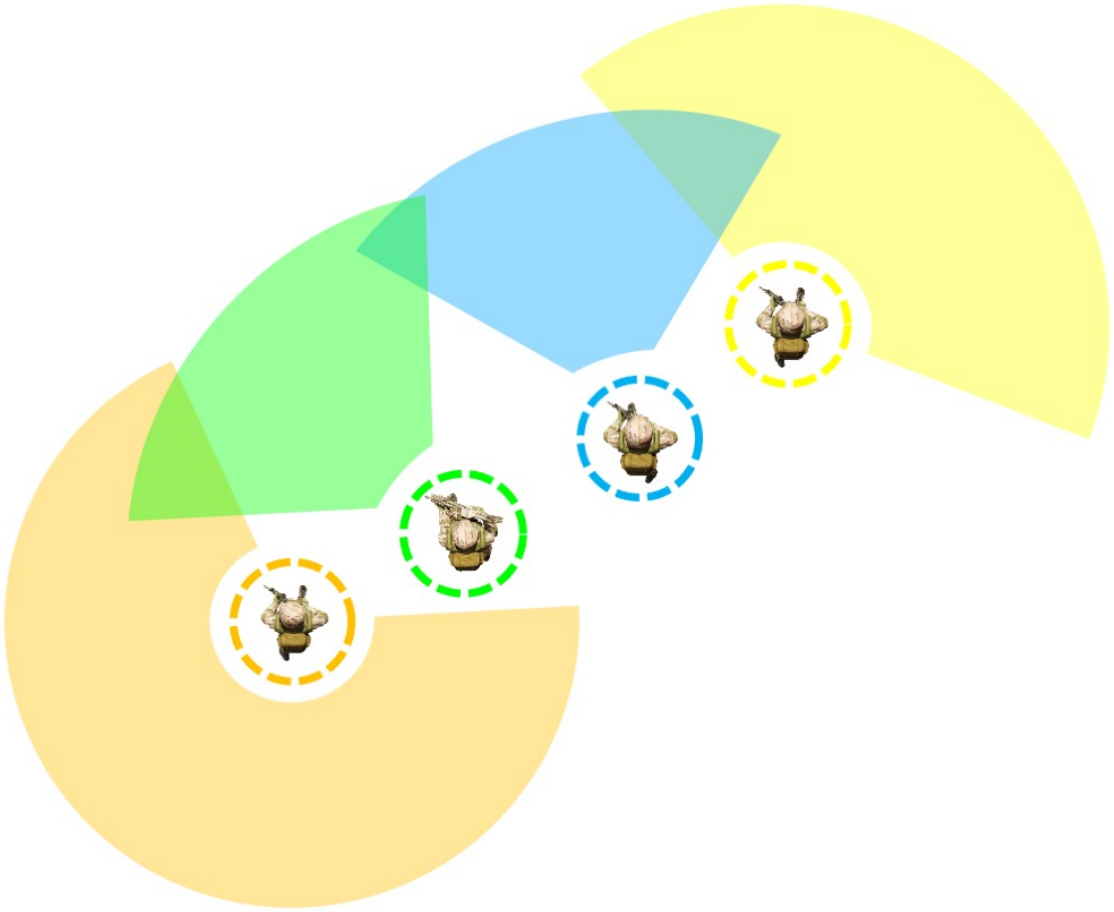
The echelon left is the reverse of the echelon right and makes massing firepower to the front or left easy since all team members can fire in those directions with nearly full fields of fire. It is essentially a hybrid between the line and the file, equally balancing the advantages and disadvantages of each. Because the echelon left is an unbalanced formation, it is generally only useful when you are relatively sure that enemy contact will come from the left. The team leader can position anywhere in the formation based on the situation.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

Echelon Left – Sectors of Fire

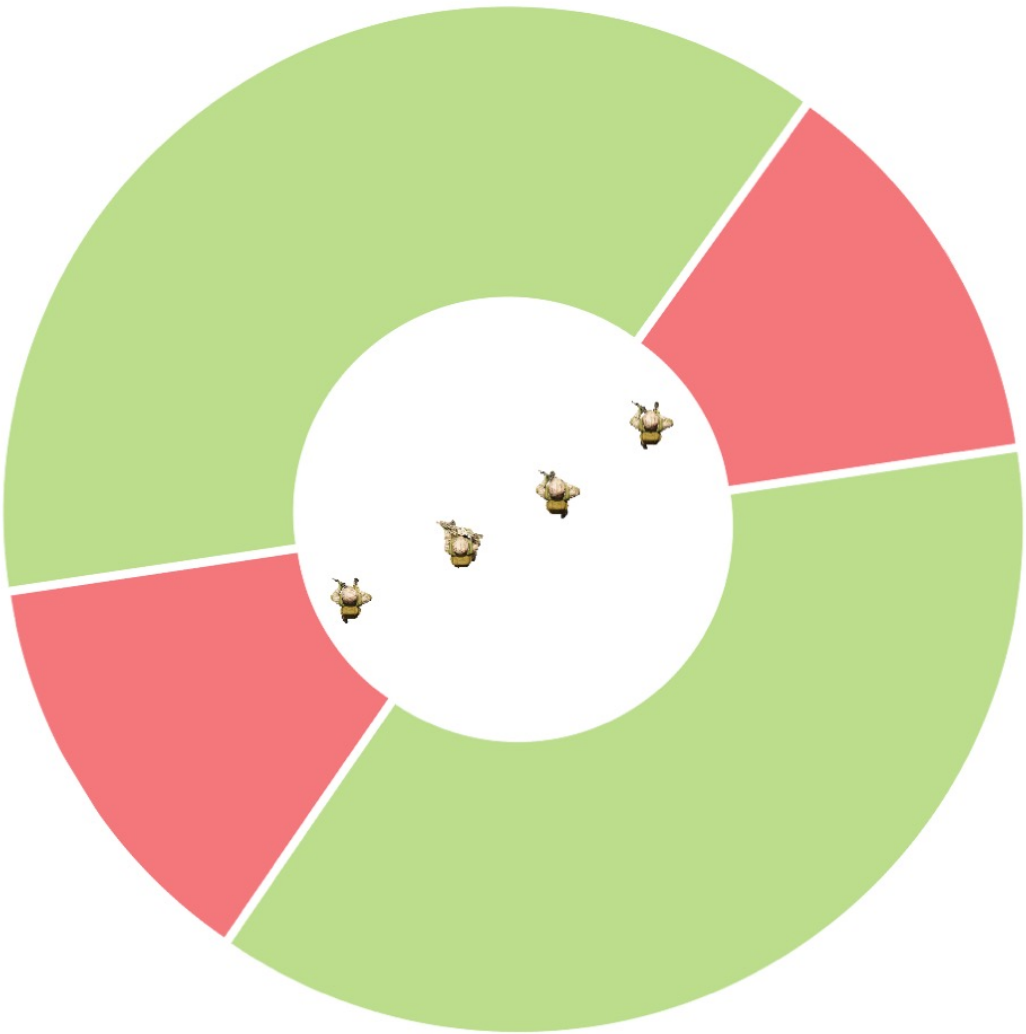
The sectors of fire for the echelon left are the reverse of those for echelon right. Coverage to the front and left is better than coverage to the rear and right.



TEAM FORMATIONS: ECHELON

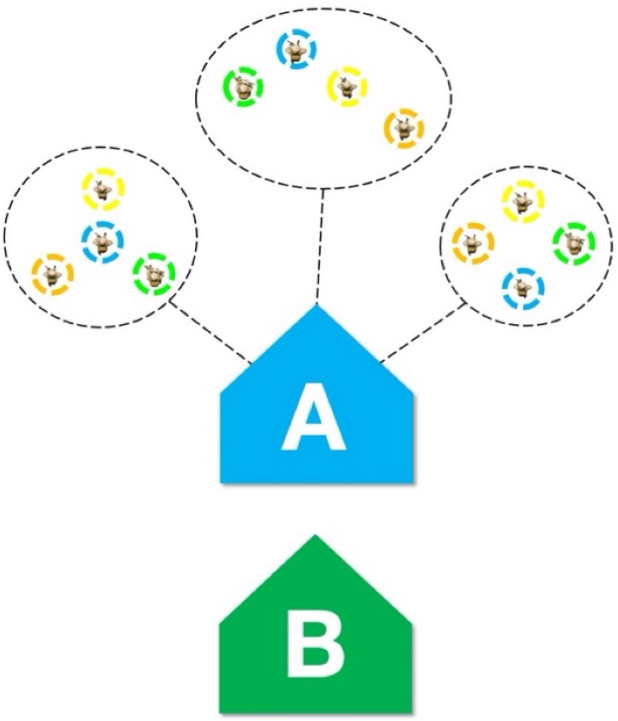
Echelon Left – Firepower vs. Vulnerability

The echelon left formation provides excellent firepower to the front and to the left. The formation is extremely vulnerable to fire from the right/front and left/rear and has little ability to return fire in those directions.



TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Squad Formations

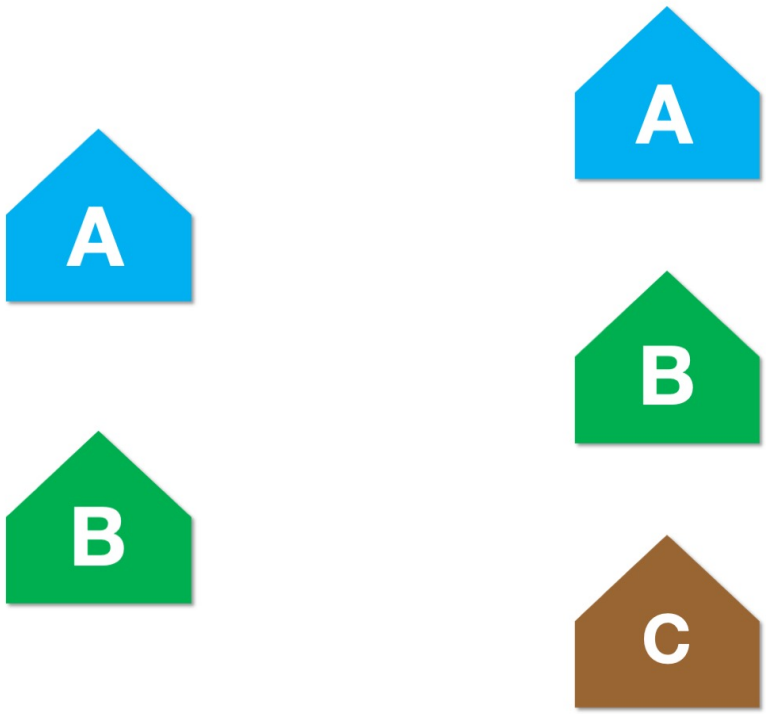
While team formations dictate the positioning of individual troops in relation to each other, squad formations dictate the positioning of teams in relation to each other. At the team level each team can use whatever formation it chooses based on the situation or a higher leader's orders. There are many possible combinations of team formations that can be used in each squad formation. Therefore, to represent squad formations teams will be shown as colored shapes labeled A, B or C etc. Individual soldiers within the teams will not be depicted in most squad level formation diagrams.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD COLUMN

Squad Column – General Discussion

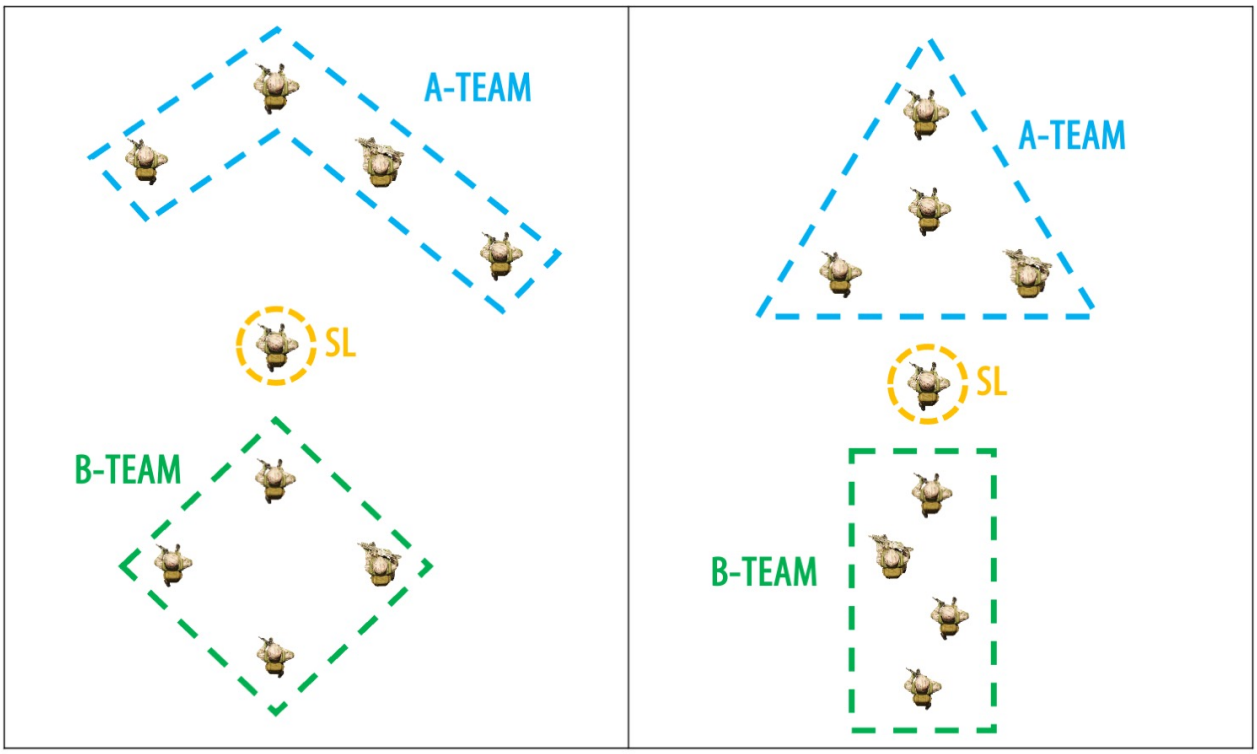
The column formation provides good mobility and is easy to control. Movement is easy when one team can simply follow the other. Spacing between the two teams can vary depending on the situation. Closer spacing offers better control and speed of movement. Wider spacing reduces vulnerability. Having one team in the lead and one team in trail also allows the lead team to act as an advanced guard for the trail team We will discuss spacing and guard elements more in the next section covering squad movement techniques. If the lead team makes contact with enemies to the front, the trail element is in position to maneuver to either the left or right to respond to the enemy. In very restricted terrain like jungle, sometimes the column formation (with teams in file) is the only formation option. The diagrams below depict examples of the squad column formation with two-team and three-team squads.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD COLUMN

Squad Column – Squad and Team Combination Examples

As already discussed, squad formations describe the position of teams in relation to each other. Within those teams, the troops can assume whatever team formation best fits the situation. The example on the lower left is commonly used by the U.S. Army. Placing the lead team in a wedge allows massing of firepower to the front while using a diamond in the rear improves control and makes it easier to provide rear security. The example on the right employs an arrowhead in the lead and a staggered file in the rear. Whether there are two or three teams in the squad, you can combine the various team formations in any combination to fit the situation.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD LINE

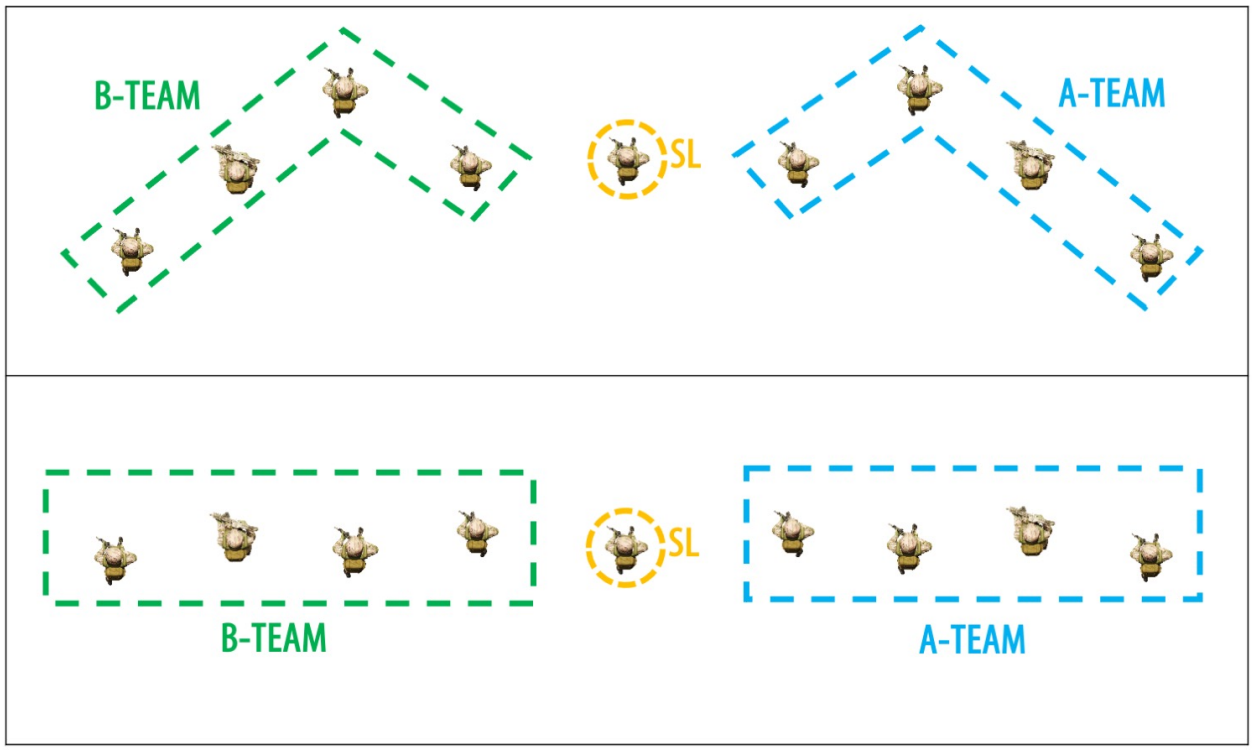
Squad Line – General Discussion

The on-line or line formation allows the squad the ability to mass fire to the front. However, the line can be difficult to control while moving, especially in restricted terrain. For this reason, squads will often move using another formation, and stop before shifting to the line formation. In some situations, a squad might advance on-line when assaulting forward through an objective or when sweeping/searching an area. The squad line is typically employed with teams also on-line or in staggered line which means all personnel are spread out side-by-side (abreast) and able to fire forward without risk of friendly fire. The picture below depicts a squad line that has only two teams, however, the line formation can be employed regardless of the number of teams in the squad.

SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD LINE

Squad Line – Squad and Team Combination Examples

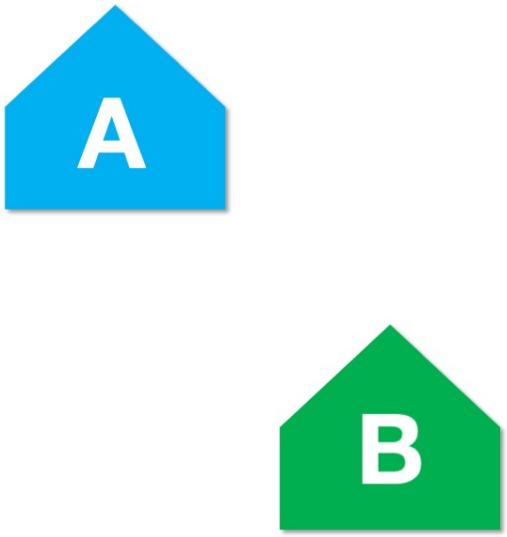
As with other squad formations, the troops within the subordinate teams can assume whatever team formation best fits the situation. The two examples below show how different team formations can be employed in a squad line. In the top example, the teams are in wedge formations while in the bottom example the teams are in staggered lines. The top example offers better control and mobility while the bottom example offers better fields of fire to the front. Each formation combination has different advantages and disadvantages.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD ECHELON

Squad Echelon – General Discussion

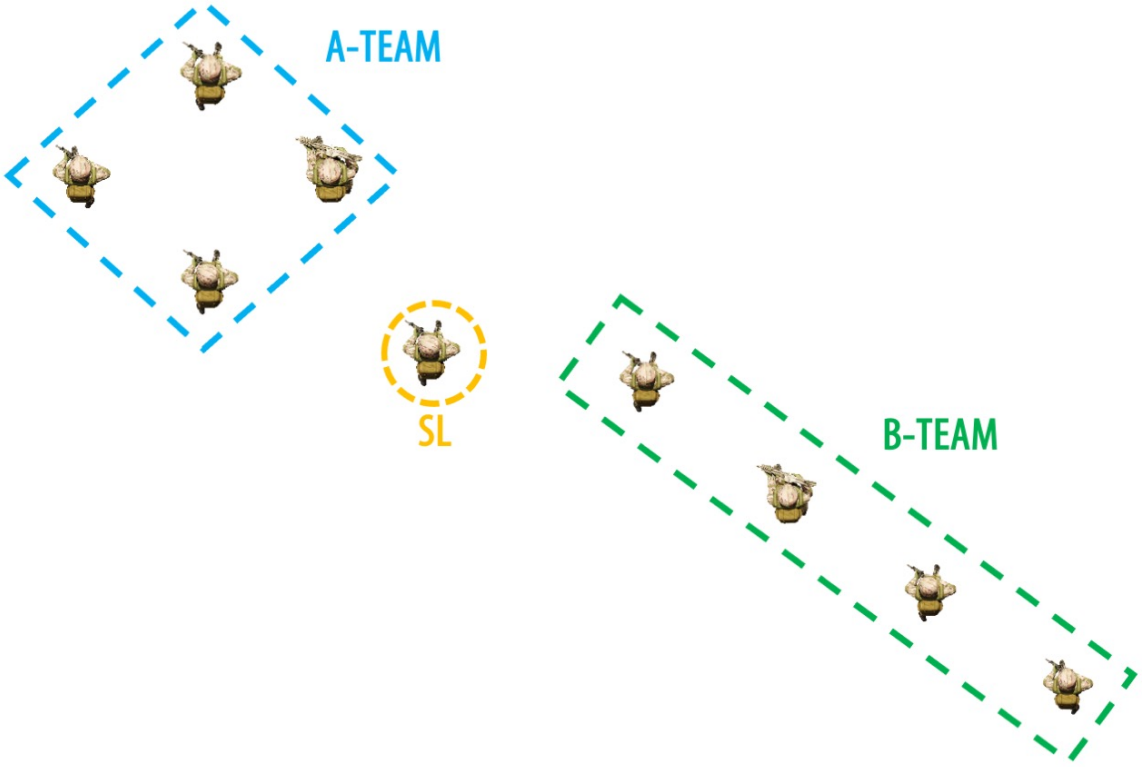
The echelon formation calls for offsetting the trail team(s) to either the left or right in a diagonal configuration. The direction in which the trail team is offset can be called the "strong side." The echelon formation provides additional security and firepower to the strong side. It will also be easier for the trail element to maneuver to the strong side and easier for the element to quickly break contact if they encounter enemies to the strong side. The echelon also makes it easier for both teams to fire to the front quickly if needed, since unlike in the column formation, the lead team is not blocking the trail team's field of fire to the front.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD ECHELON

Squad Echelon – Squad and Team Combination Example

As with other squad formations, each team in the echelon can assume its own team formation and each of the many possible combinations has its own advantages and disadvantages. In the example below, the lead team is in a formation that is easy to control for quick movement while the team echeloned to the right is already in position to provide immediate fire to the front and right in support of the lead team.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD WEDGE

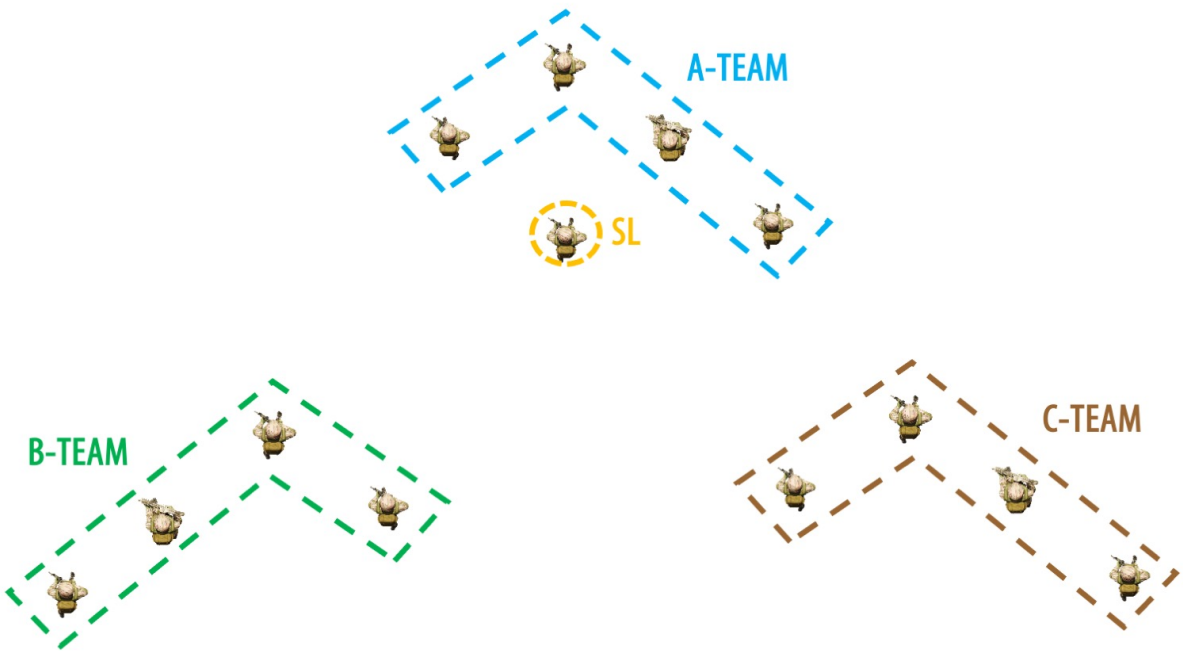
Squad Wedge – General Discussion

The squad wedge is easiest to control when employing a three-team squad. It calls for placing one team in the lead with the other two teams echeloned to each side. The wedge allows almost the same frontal firepower as the line but is easy enough to control that it can also be used as a movement formation, even when traveling long distances or in wooded terrain. The wedge makes it very easy for the squad to come on-line quickly and fire to the front. It is possible to employ a squad wedge with a two-team squad. The squad leader leads the formation with each team in echelon to the left and right. However, this formation can be difficult to control, especially at night or in restricted terrain.

SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD WEDGE

Squad Wedge – Squad and Team Combination Example

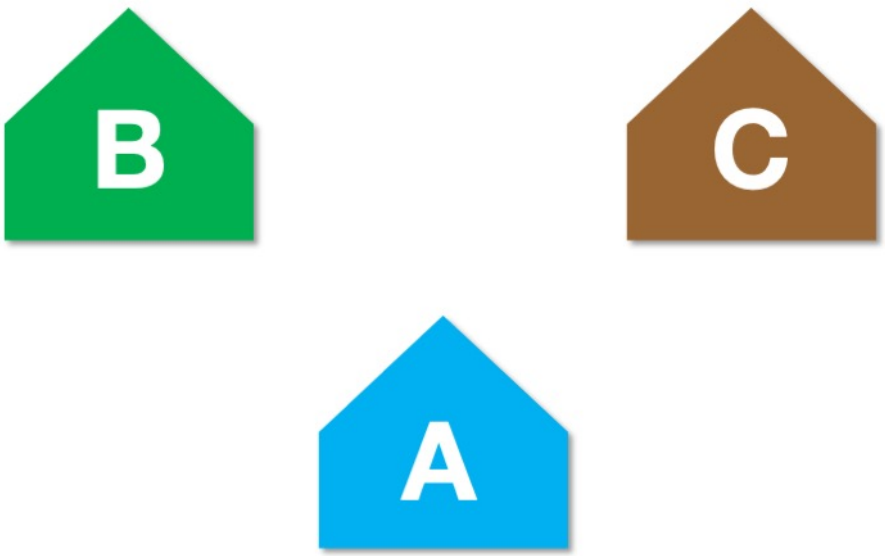
Below is an example of how to combine team formations in a squad wedge with three teams. You can employ team formations in any combination, including using a different formation for each team. However, the more complicated the formation gets the more difficult it will be to control and maintain, especially in low visibility conditions. The example below shows one of the most simple combinations with both the squad and subordinate teams in wedge formations. While this arrangement is simple it is also very effective, since it is easy for the squad to maneuver, but also easy for the individual teams to quickly come on-line and mass fire to the front or sides.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD VEE

Squad Vee – General Discussion

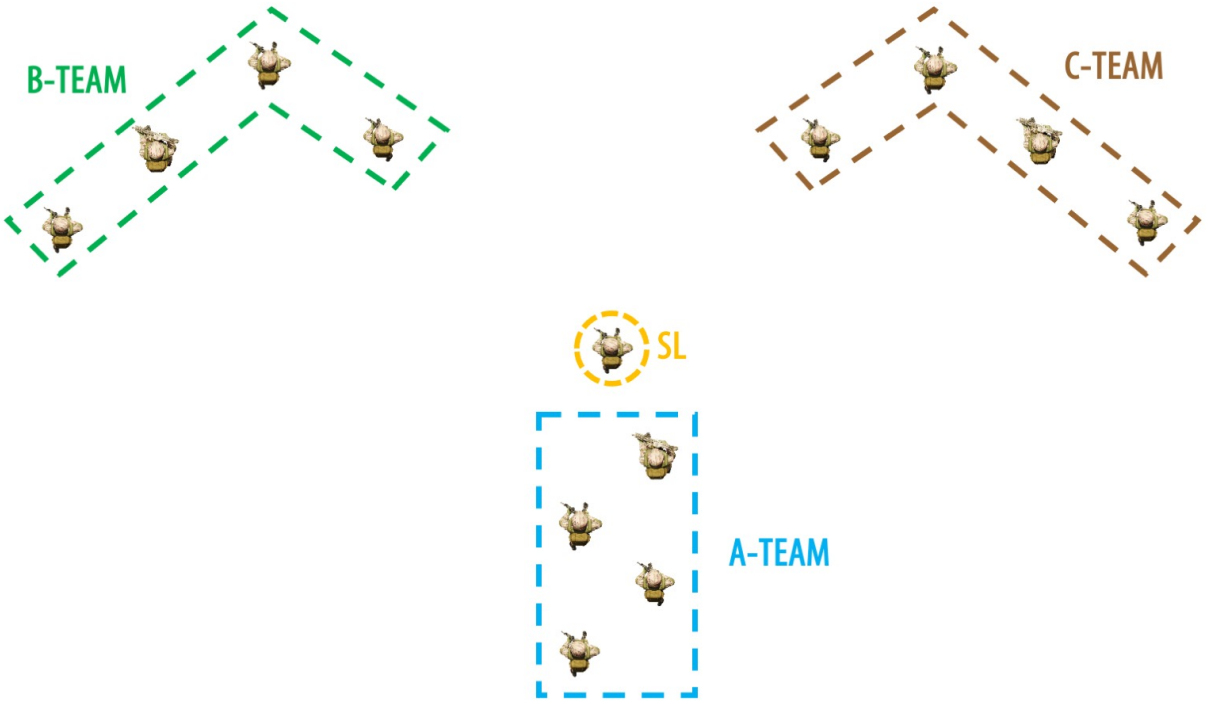
The squad vee is easiest to control when employing a three-team squad. It calls for placing two teams, online (abreast) in the lead with one team to the rear in reserve. The vee formation allows for rapid massing of firepower to the front, while still leaving a reserve element far enough back to maneuver if needed. However, like the line, this formation is difficult to control. It is possible to employ a squad wedge with a two-team squad. The squad leader remains in the rear of the formation with each team extending forward in echelons to the left and right. However, this formation can be difficult to control and is only useful in specialized situations like searching roads for boobytraps etc.



SQUAD FORMATIONS: SQUAD VEE

Squad Vee – Squad and Team Combination Example

Below is an example of how to employ the squad vee with a three-team squad. By focusing the majority of manpower to the lead, the vee makes it possible to mass heavy firepower to the front immediately if the squad should make chance contact. In this example, the lead teams are in wedge formations ready to come on line and fire to the front, while the rear team stays with the squad leader in a staggered file ready to move quickly and flank around to either side or augment the line.



TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Movement Techniques

Movement formations dictate the positioning of troops or teams in relation to each other and offer different levels of advantage in mobility/control, firepower and vulnerability. Movement techniques have to do with how the unit maintains security and prepares itself to make contact with the enemy. Squad movement techniques ensure that if/when the squad encounters enemy forces, the squad is in the most advantageous possible position and is not caught by surprise. Movement techniques generally call either for the employment of a guard element, or moving in "bounds" where one element bounds forward while the other element remains stationary providing cover and security.

Guard elements provide early warning of enemy contact and prevent the squad from becoming decisively engaged all at once. Essentially, if the squad is moving in one, tightly-packed group and it encounters an enemy force, the enemy will be able to see and engage the entire squad immediately. The entire squad will be under fire and it will be difficult for the squad to maneuver with enemy bullets cracking overhead. By pushing a smaller guard element out to the front, flanks or rear, if that guard element makes contact with the enemy, the enemy will only see that guard element, not the entire squad. If the enemy opens fire on the smaller guard, only the guard element will be suppressed while the rest of the squad will be free to maneuver.

To use an analogy, one way of thinking about guard elements is that they allow you not to show all of your cards. Pushing out a guard element means that you can keep the majority of the squad back, out of sight of the enemy and free to maneuver. For guard elements to work, you must take the terrain into account. For example, even if a guard element is far away from the main element, if you do not use the terrain properly, an enemy that encounters the guard element might still be able to see the main element. There must be enough masking terrain features between the guard element and the main element to keep the main element hidden.

In addition to guard elements, movement techniques can call for bounding. Bounding means that one element remains stationary while the other element moves. Having one element move at a time offers a number of advantages. Stationary elements are much better able to provide security or "overwatch" than moving elements. Stationary elements have an easier time

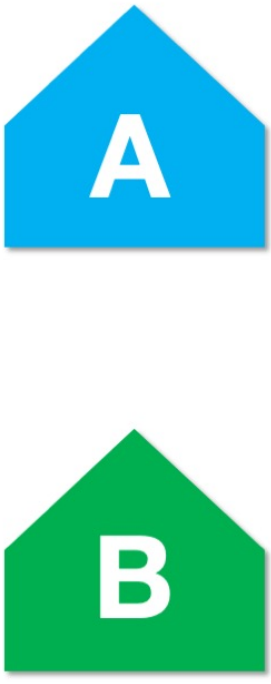
spotting movement and using optics to search for enemies that are farther away. Stationary elements also make less noise so they are better able to hear enemies around them. Finally, stationary elements are already in a formation and stable position to fire. For all these reasons, a stationary element is much more able to provide security and covering fire than a moving element. Keeping one element stationary allows it to provide overwatch and security for the moving element(s).

As with guard elements, effective use of terrain is very important for bounding. For example, a moving element must not move forward so far that the overwatching element can no longer support it. The idea of bounding is for both elements to be mutually supporting and able to cover each other in the event of enemy contact. When a moving element reaches a good position to stop and set up overwatch, it will alert the other element which will then become the mobile element and move to yet another position to stop and set up overwatch. The two elements trade off in this manner, only one element moving at a time. There is always at least one element that is remaining still to provide overwatch. You can execute bounding by team, buddy team or with individual troopers.

MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: TRAVELING

Traveling in Formation

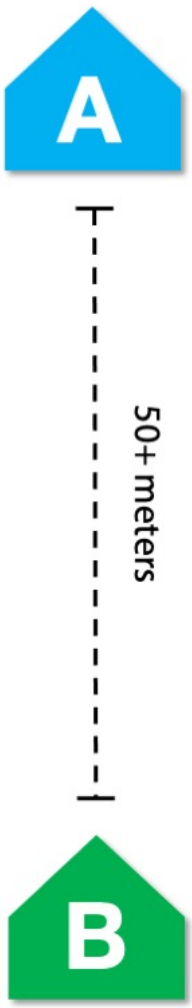
Traveling is simply moving in any standard formation as a unit without using any guard elements or bounding. Therefore, the traveling movement technique does not take advantage of any of the security benefits just discussed. Traveling is just the standard, baseline movement technique designed to be used when enemy contact is not likely or in an emergency situation where speed and unit integrity are critical. For traveling, the spacing between teams should be relatively close (approximately 20 meters) in order to maximize control, accountability and movement speed. Because teams are closely spaced and there are no guard/overwatch elements, the squad will be very vulnerable. You can use traveling with any squad formation. You are essentially just moving as a unit in the base formation itself. The example below shows a squad traveling in a squad column formation.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: GUARD ELEMENTS

Advanced Guard (Traveling Overwatch)

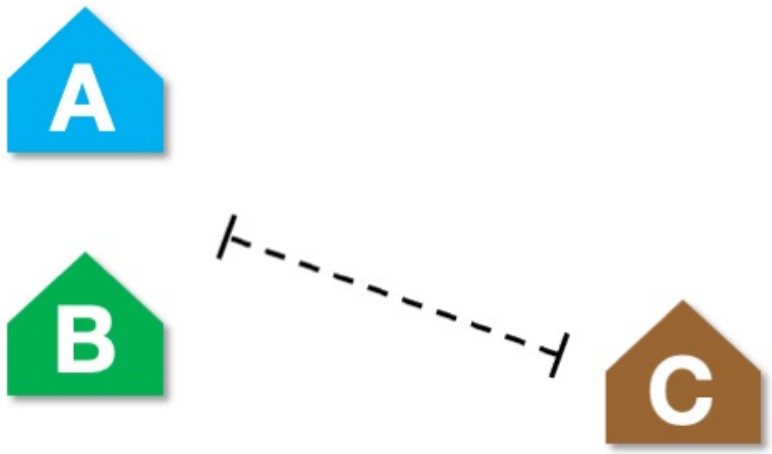
When enemy contact is likely to come from the front, it is advisable to employ an advanced guard element. To deploy the advanced guard, push a single team forward approximately 50-meters. While 50-meters is a good rule-of-thumb, the actual distance will vary depending on the situation and terrain. If you are operating with a three-team squad, push only one team forward and leave the other two teams in a normal traveling configuration. It is also possible to use an even smaller element, like a two-person buddy team, as an advanced guard if you have limited personnel in the squad. In U.S. Army doctrine at the squad level, this movement technique is called "traveling overwatch."



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: GUARD ELEMENTS

Flank Guard

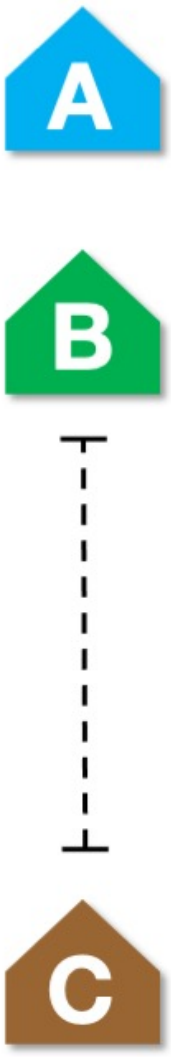
When enemy contact is likely to come from the flank (side), it is advisable to employ a flank guard element to the left and/or right. To deploy the flank guard, push a single team or element out to the side of the main formation approximately 50-meters. The actual distance will vary depending on the situation and terrain When employing a flank guard for a two-team squad, you may choose to use a 2-person guard element instead of an entire team. It is possible to employ two flank guards, one to the left and one to the right, except because a squad has relatively few personnel, this is not always practical.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: GUARD ELEMENTS

Rear Guard

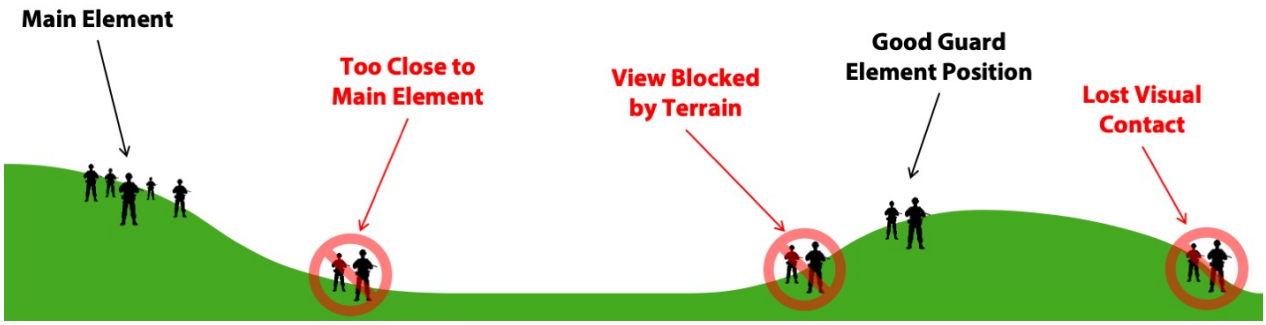
In some situations, when enemy contact is likely to come from the rear, it is advisable to employ a rear guard element. To deploy the rear guard, leave a single team or element to the rear of the main formation approximately 50-meters. The actual distance will vary depending on the situation and terrain. When employing a rear guard for a two-team squad, you may choose to use a 2-person element instead of an entire team. Employing a rear guard can be dangerous since if the squad is attempting to break contact with pursuing enemies and the rear guard sustains a casualty, the squad will have to go back to evacuate the casualty.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: GUARD ELEMENTS

Terrain and Spacing Considerations for Guard Elements

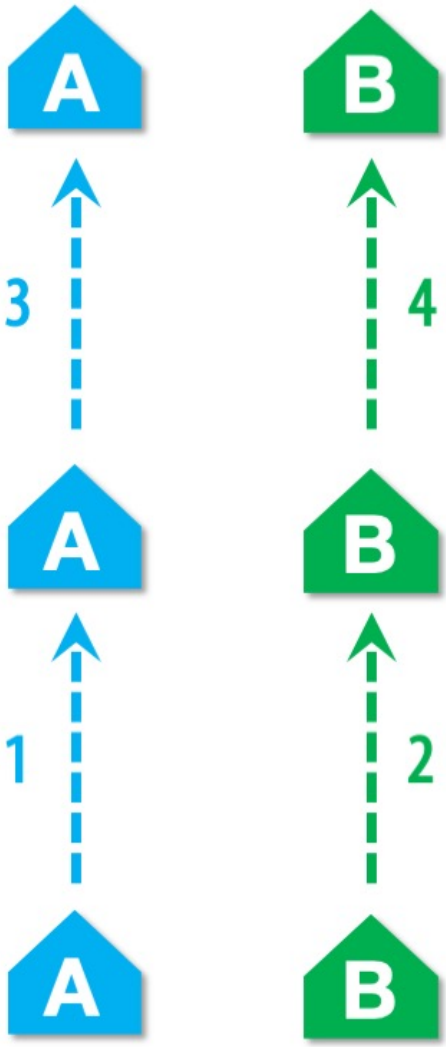
There are several guidelines to consider when choosing how far guard elements should push out from the main formation. The guard element should be far enough out so that if it makes contact with enemy forces, those forces should not be able to see the main element. This will allow the main element to remain undetected and maneuver on the enemy. The guard element should be far enough out to see past major terrain obstacles (hills, ridgelines etc.) before the main element. The guard element should not be so far out that it loses contact with the main element or becomes isolated in the event that it takes casualties. Both elements should be mutually supporting. It is possible to employ guard elements outside visual range of the main element. However, this incurs greater risk and requires detailed communications plans and control measures. When operating with only a small, squad-sized element this becomes even more difficult and risky so it is generally better for squads to keep guard elements within visual range. Larger units like platoons or companies have more ability to provide support and can employ larger, more self-sustaining guard elements.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: SQUAD BOUNDING

Squad Bounding by Team (Successive)

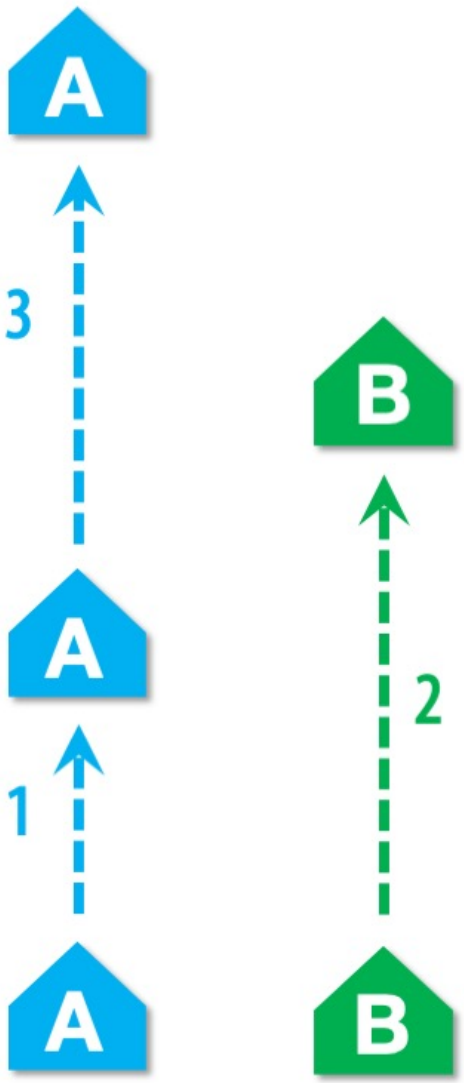
When enemy contact is expected, it is usually advisable to move only one team at a time while the other team provides cover (or overwatch). Successive bounding is slower but offers more control and reduces the chances of friendly fire, especially at night. To conduct successive bounding (also known as "lead and trail") the lead team will move forward to the next covered position while the trail team provides overwatch. Once the lead team is in position the trail team will move up until it is even with the lead team. The lead team will once again bound forward while the trail team covers. Once the lead team is in position the trail team will move up until it is even with the lead team.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: SQUAD BOUNDING

Squad Bounding by Team (Alternating)

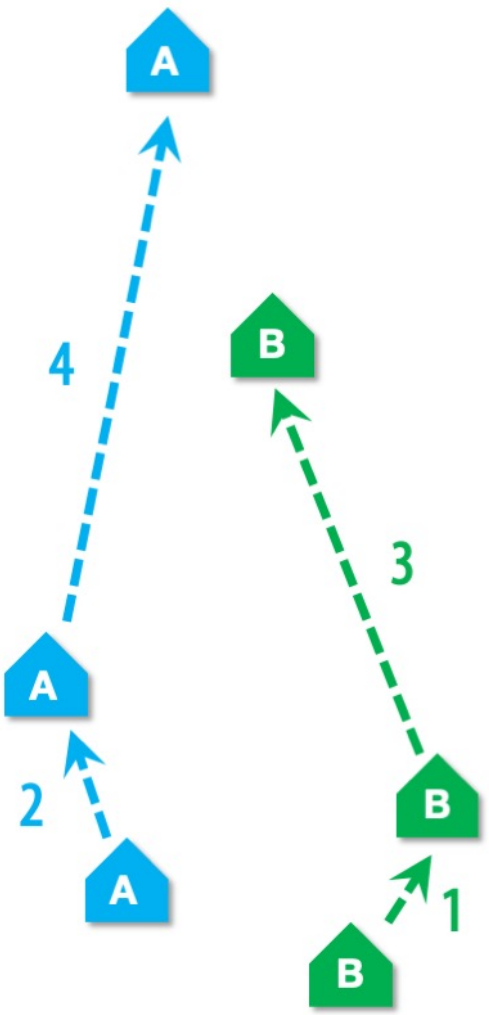
When enemy contact is expected, it is usually advisable to move only one team at a time while the other team provides cover (or overwatch). Alternating bounding is faster but offers less control and increases the chances of friendly fire, especially at night. To conduct alternating bounding (also known as "leapfrog") one team will move forward to the next covered position while the other team provides overwatch. Once the first team is in position the other team will move past to take the lead and occupy the next covered, overwatch position. The two teams will continue to bound past each other, leapfrogging from one covered position to the next.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: SQUAD BOUNDING

Spacing Considerations for Bounding

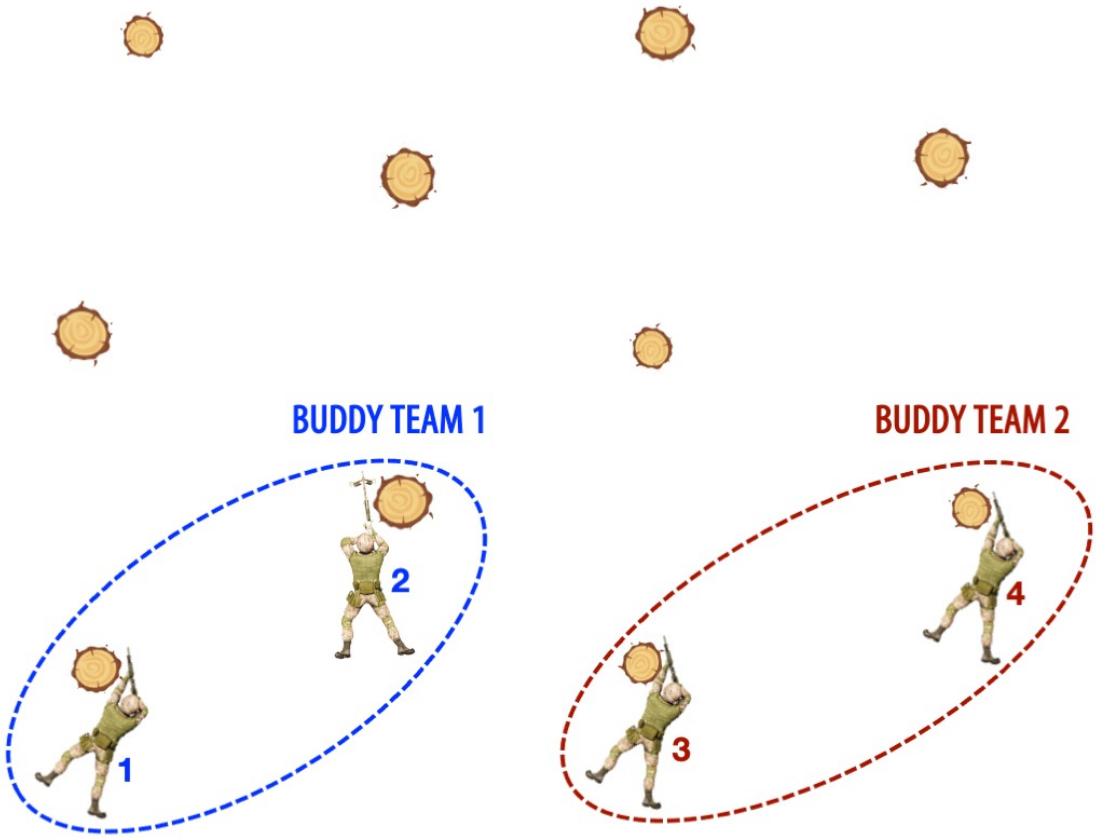
There are several guidelines to consider when deciding how far to bound forward. These are similar to the concerns for how far out to employ a guard element. A team should not bound so far that it loses contact with the other team. For example, a team should not bound over a hill and out of sight. A team should not bound so far that the two teams are unable to be mutually supporting and assist each other with casualty evacuation if necessary. A team should bound far enough to see more than the stationary team can see. Not all bounds will be the same length, since the distance of each bound depends on the terrain and the situation. One bound might be short while the next will be very far.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: INDIVIDUAL BUDDY RUSH

STEP 1: Divide the Team into Buddy Teams

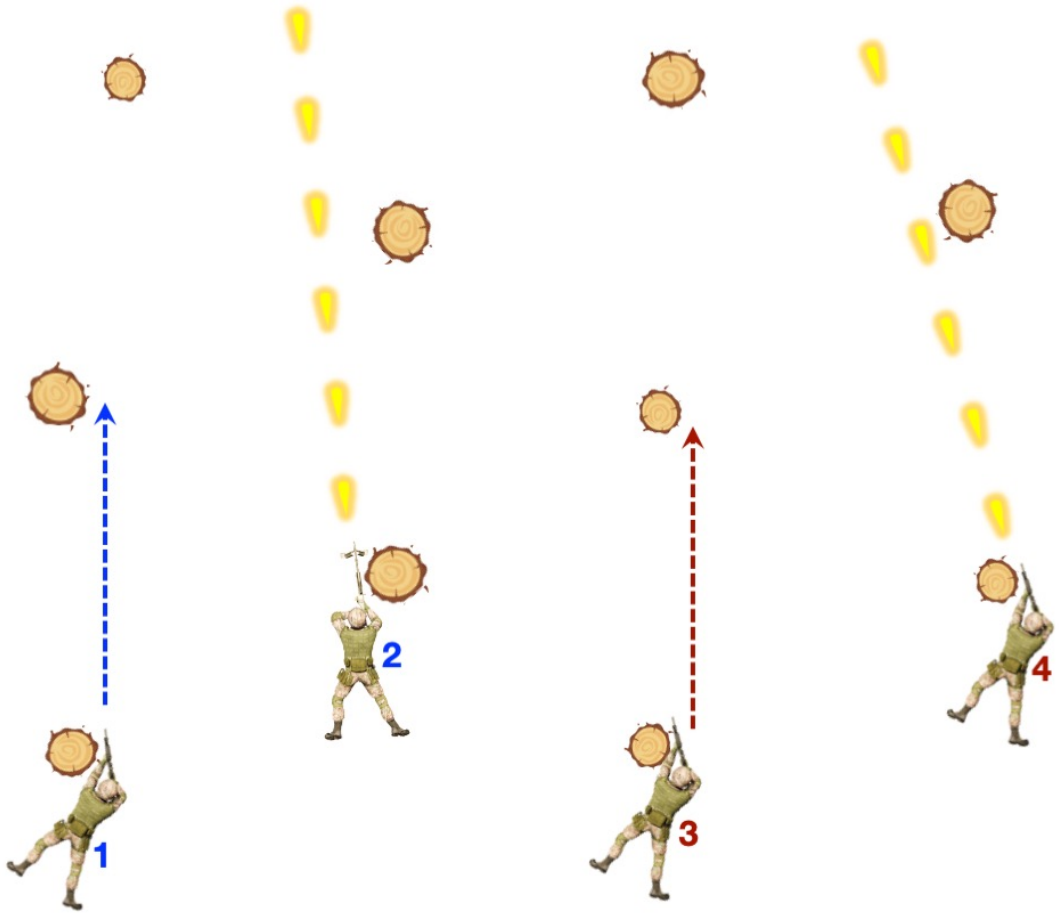
While you can use the bounding movement technique as a squad, you can also use it as a team. One common approach is the individual 3-5 second rush or the "buddy rush" when you are under fire or assaulting through an enemy position. When conducting 3-5 second rushes, you can have one team member rush forward at a time. This maximizes the team's volume of suppressive fire since all but one of the weapons will always be firing. However, this technique is slow and can be difficult to control. Another technique is the "buddy rush" where team members split up into buddy teams, then bound individually, alternating with their buddies. Buddy rushes can employ either alternating bounds or successive bounds. In the diagram below, the team is split up into two buddy teams and the individual troopers are labeled 1-4 for demonstration purposes.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: INDIVIDUAL BUDDY RUSH

STEP 2: One Buddy Covers and the Other Bounds

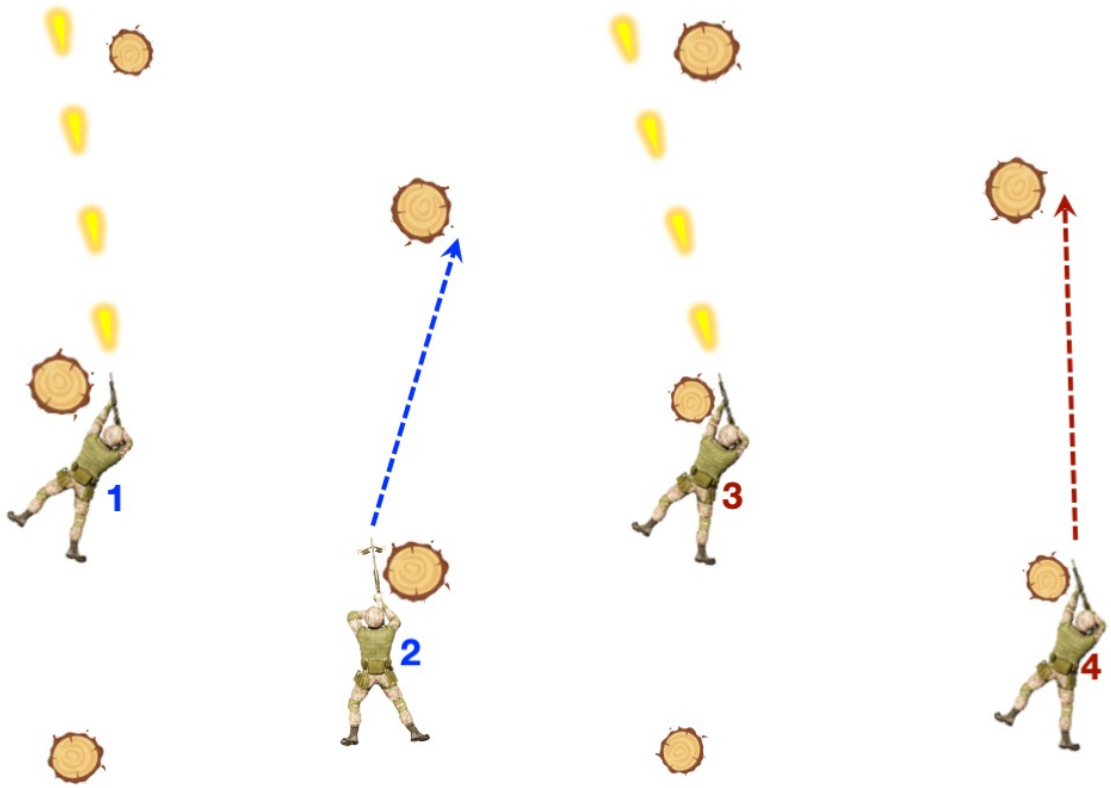
To execute one buddy in each team will lay down suppressive fire. In the example below, the even numbered troopers (2 and 4) lay down fire. The odd numbered troopers (1 and 3) identify their next covered and concealed firing positions, get up, rush forward for 3-5 seconds and then take cover behind the position. Combat experience has shown that 3-5 seconds is the approximate period of time it takes for the enemy to see you, aim at you and engage you. Therefore, by rushing forward only for 3-5 seconds you aim to be prone and behind cover before the enemy can react and shoot at you.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: INDIVIDUAL BUDDY RUSH

STEP 3: Bounding Troops Stop and Cover the Others

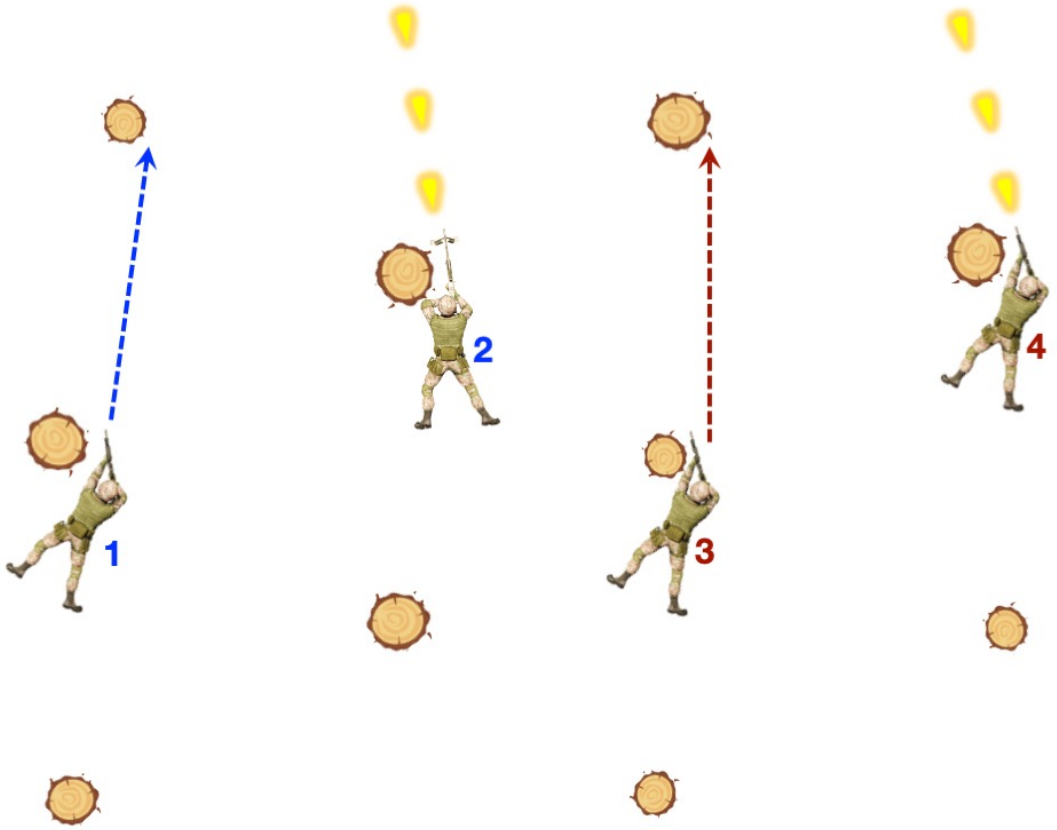
In the example below, after the odd numbered buddies finish bounding to the next position, they will get down and begin laying down covering fire. Once the odd numbered buddies begin firing, the even numbered buddies can bound forward. Some schools call for buddy teams to communicate verbally, yelling back and forth to let each other know when they are ready to move, moving or set in their cover positions. The problem with verbal communication in a firefight is that the sound of the gunfire is very loud and you may not be able to hear your buddy or may misunderstand what your buddy is saying. Therefore we recommend not relying on verbal communication. Instead, you can hear when your buddy is laying down fire when he/she starts to shoot. That is your signal to move. When you get down and start shooting that is your buddy's signal to move.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: INDIVIDUAL BUDDY RUSH

STEP 4: Bounding Troops Stop and Cover the Others

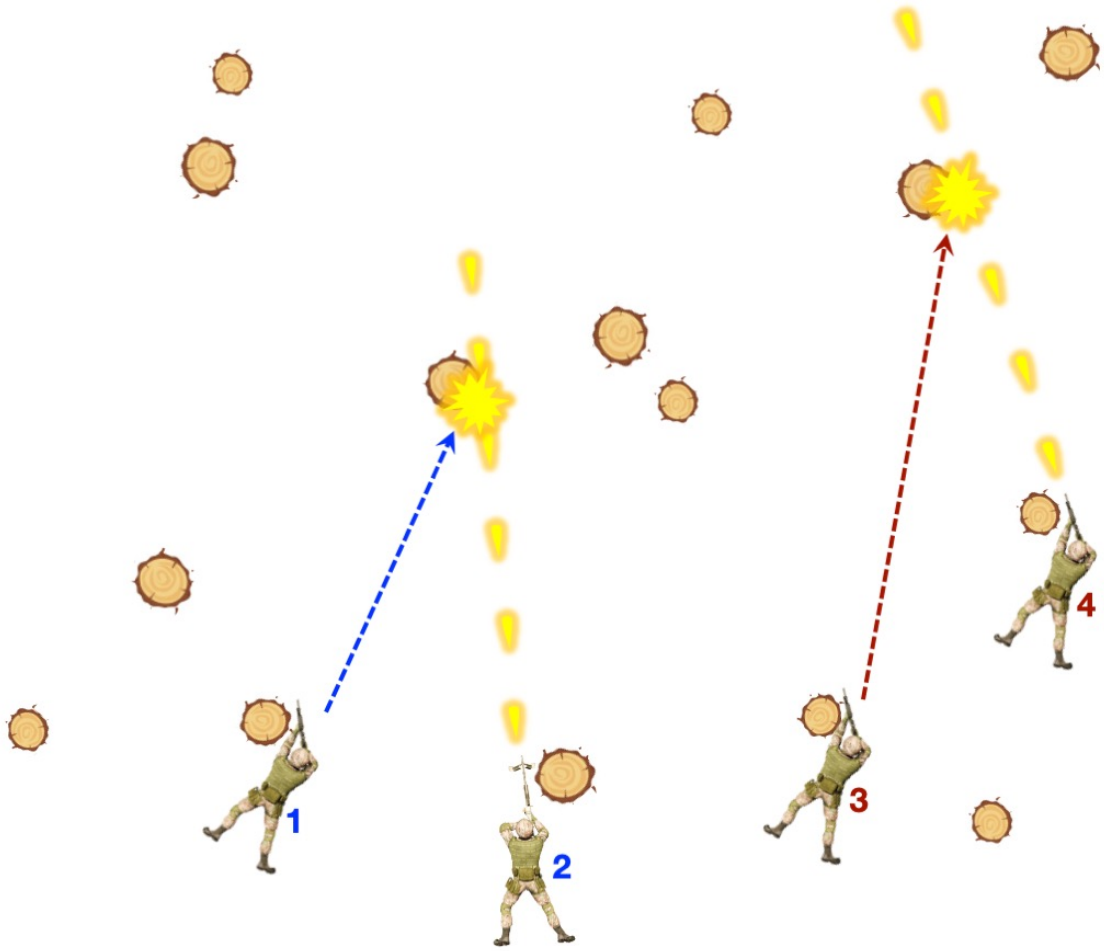
This alternating sequence continues with one person from each buddy team bounding forward as the other person provides covering fire. Once again, the numbers are included only for explanatory purposes to keep track of each team member.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: INDIVIDUAL BUDDY RUSH

Problems with the Individual Buddy Rush

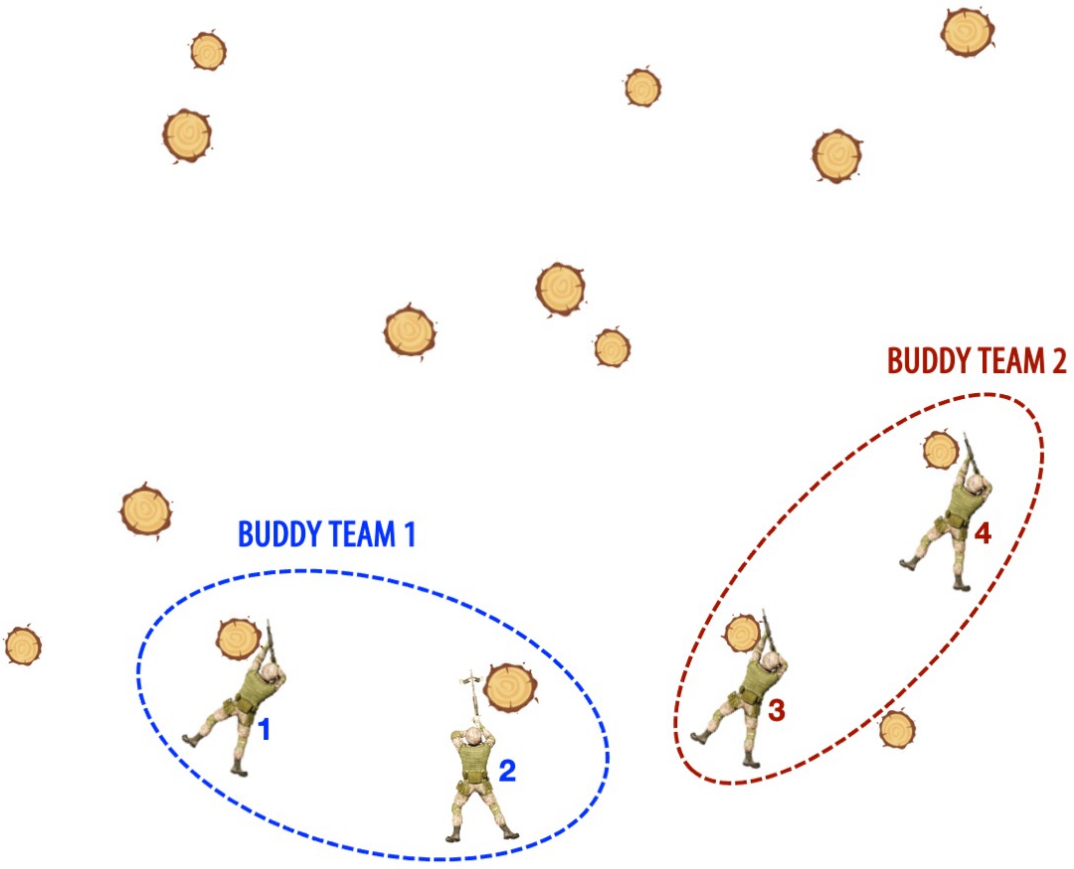
While the individual buddy rush is a valid technique, it can be difficult to execute safely in a high-stress situation, especially for a less experienced team in limited visibility conditions. In the previous examples, the trees were distributed evenly for the purpose of clear explanation. In the real world, available cover might not be as conveniently positioned as in the example below. The available cover might draw bounding troopers into the line of fire of their teammates. Once again, this is a particularly serious risk at night or in low visibility conditions where the bounding line can lose its continuity and become more and more disorganized with each bound. Once again, this does not mean you should not use the individual buddy rush technique but if you do, be particularly aware of this danger.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: BOUNDING BY BUDDY TEAM

STEP 1: Divide the Team into Buddy Teams

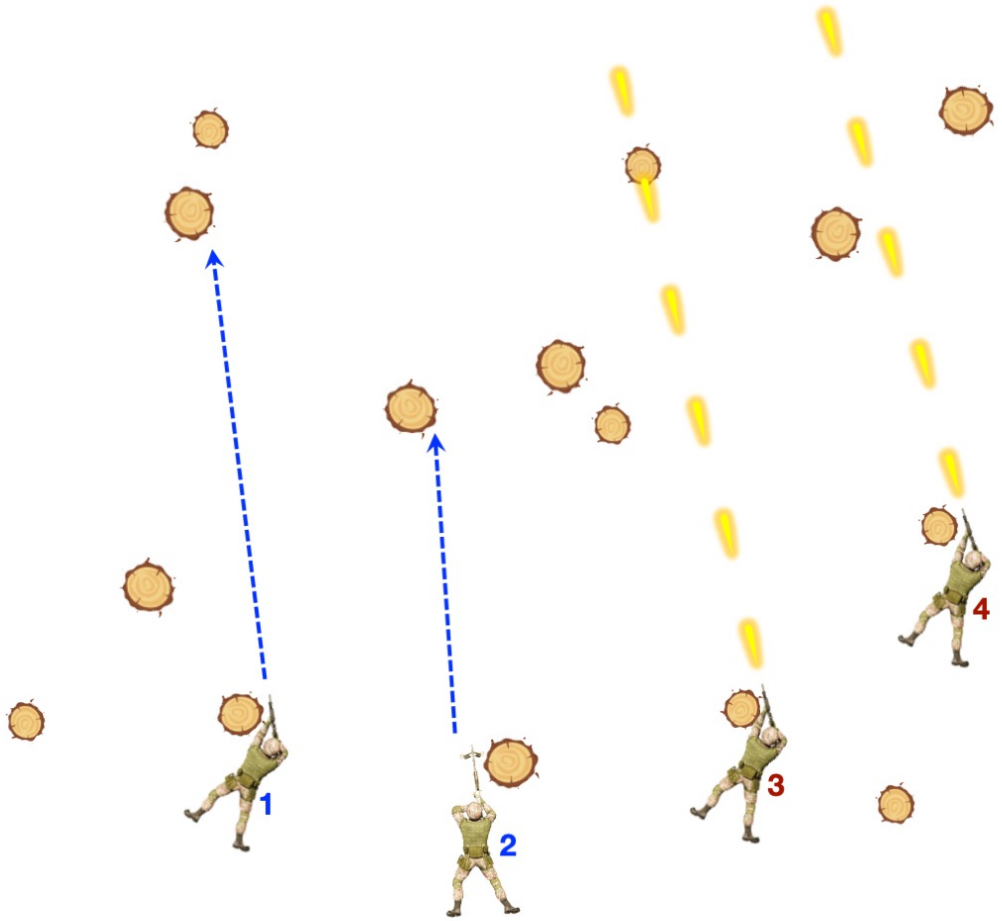
As just explained, the individual buddy rush technique can be dangerous in high-stress, low-visibility conditions. An alternative that we recommend is bounding by buddy team. Bounding by buddy team can be easier to control and may reduce the chance of troops running into each other's fields of fire. Bounding by buddy team also makes it easier for troops to stay in their lanes even when the distribution of cover is uneven as in the picture below. To execute this technique, you still divide your team into two buddy teams as shown below.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: BOUNDING BY BUDDY TEAM

STEP 2: One Buddy Team Covers and the Other Moves

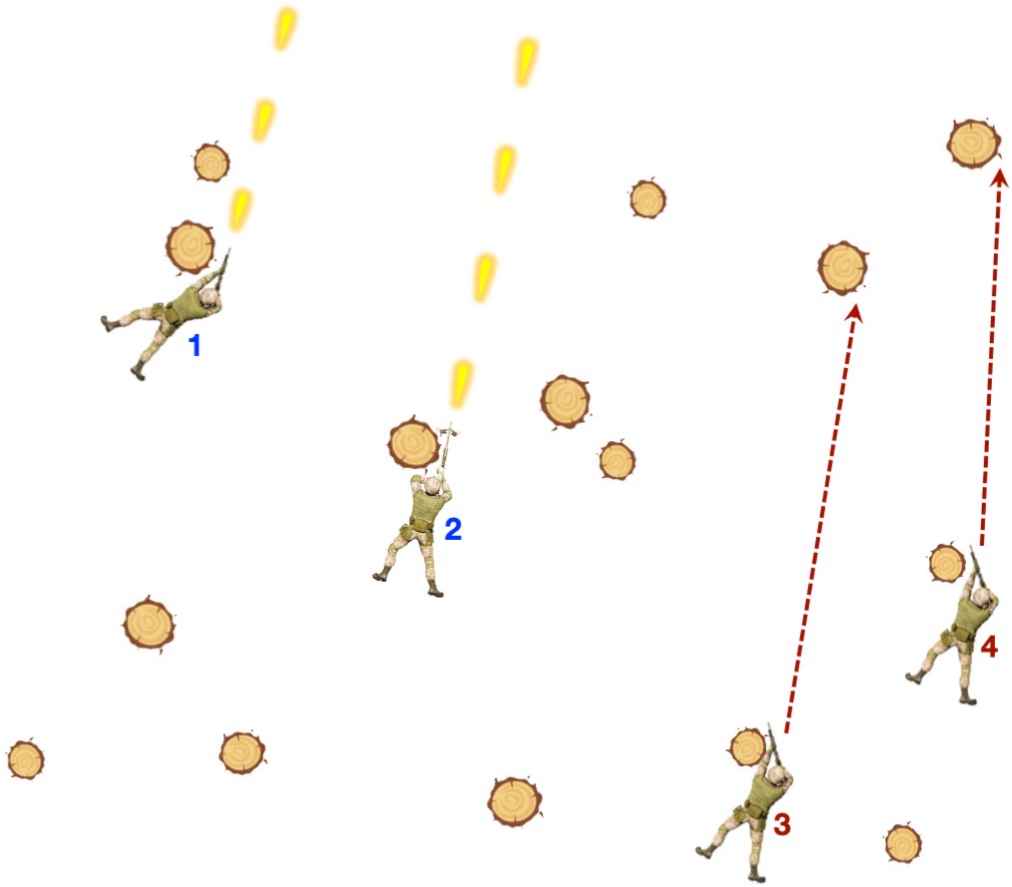
First, one of the two buddy teams will open fire to provide support. In the example below, the buddy team on the right provides suppressing fire while the team on the left bounds forward. The teams will still keep their bounds within the 3-5 second limit to avoid getting seen and shot by the enemy.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: BOUNDING BY BUDDY TEAM

STEP 3: Bounding Buddy Team Stops and Covers the Other

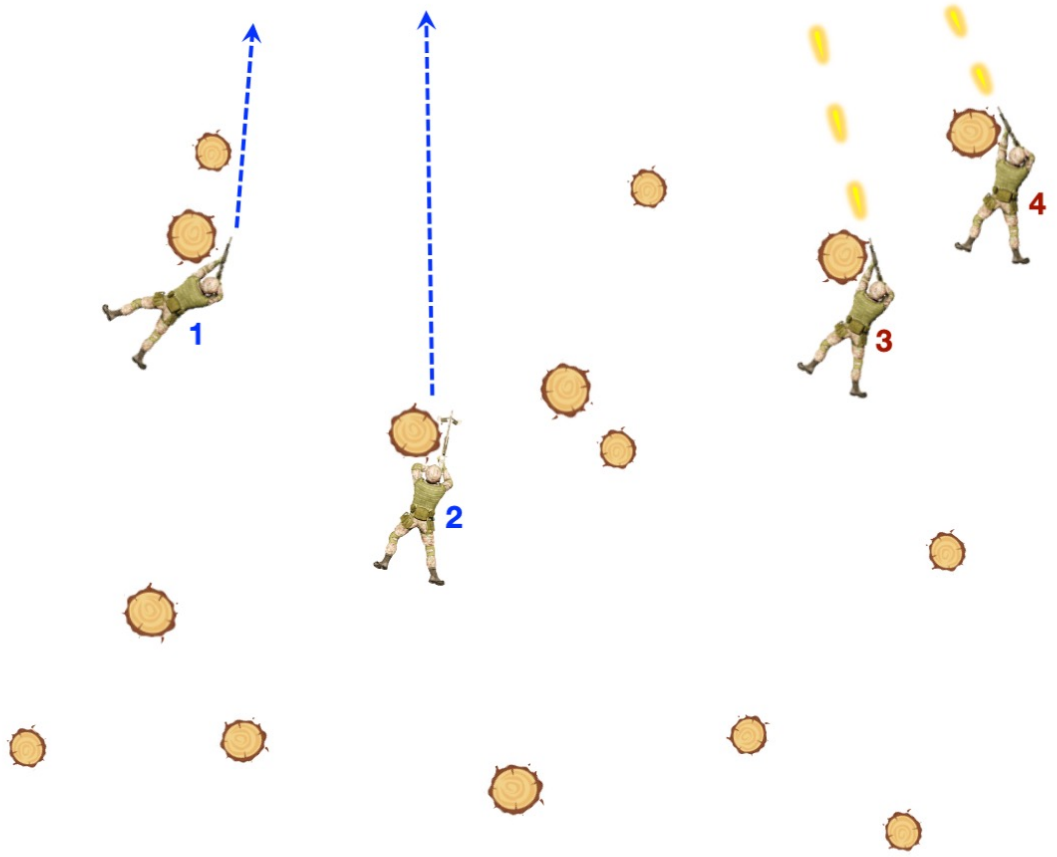
Once completing the first bound, the bounding team will stop, take cover and begin laying down suppressive fire. When the other team (the team on the right in the example below) hears the fire begin, they will identify their next covered positions, get up and bound forward.



MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES: BOUNDING BY BUDDY TEAM

STEP 4: Bounding Buddy Team Stops and Covers the Other

The bounding process continues in this way with the team on the right providing cover and the team on the left bounding forward, then the team on the left providing cover with the team on the right bounding forward. While this technique can be somewhat easier to control than the individual buddy rush, there is still a chance that the buddy teams might accidentally bound into each other's lines of fire so all troops must remain alert and be sure to stay in their lanes.



TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Combat Applications

Movement formations and movement techniques govern how the squad moves as a unit through its immediate surroundings. Choosing the ideal movement formation and movement technique helps ensure the squad is in the most advantageous possible position should it make unexpected contact with enemy forces. However, movement formations and techniques are only half of the equation. The other half is choosing the best possible route or path over the terrain while considering actual combat contingencies. Even if you expertly employ movement formations and techniques, if you choose to move through an exposed open field or get bogged down in a swamp, you may place yourself at a disadvantage.

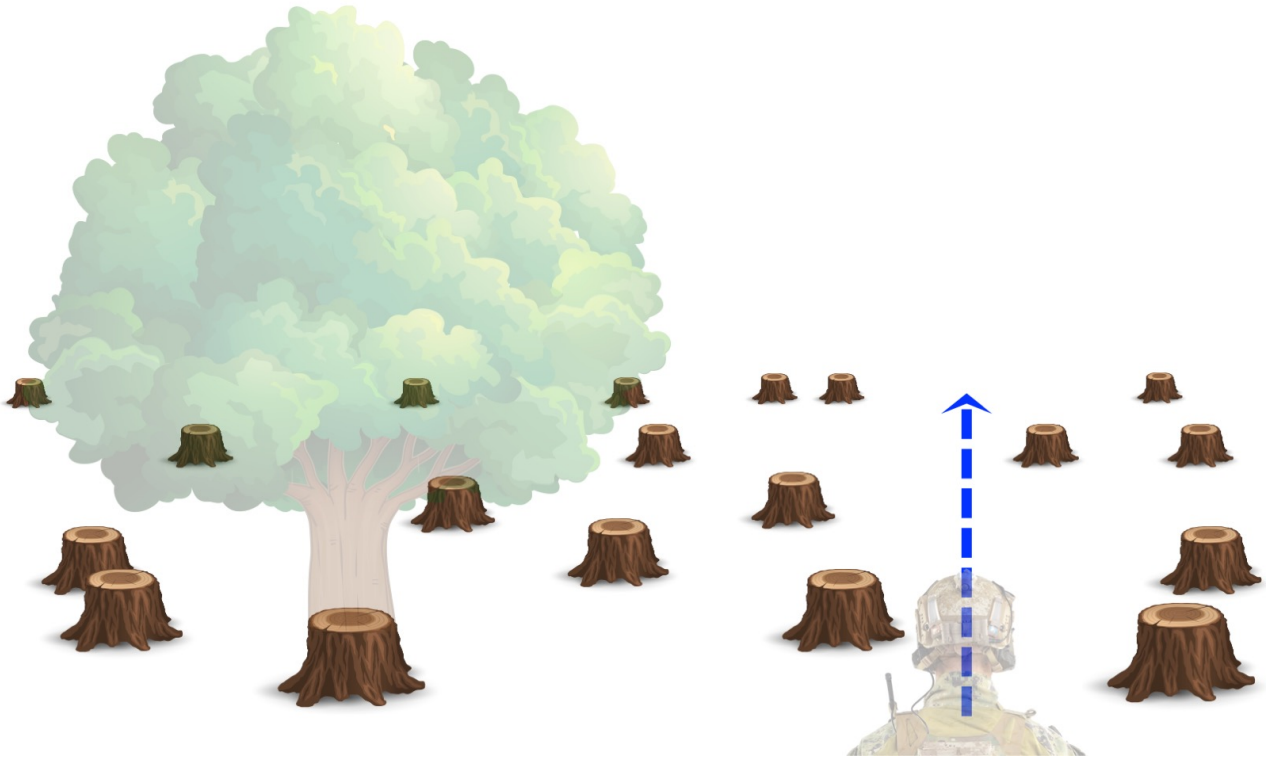
The following section gives examples of applying movement formations and techniques to real-world combat situations where enemy contact is likely or expected. There are no fixed formulas for how to do this and like all other tactical skills, the most critical factor in effective application is repeated practice under realistic conditions. If you take the principles in this section, apply them to what you have already learned about movement formations and techniques and then experiment and practice in the field against a live, thinking opponent, you and your unit will rapidly improve your ability to move tactically on the battlefield.

While the following section offers some of the most critical concepts relating to tactical movement, these concepts are often those that are most frequently left out of tactical manuals or blocks of instruction in tactical schools. Therefore, we encourage you to pay particular attention to this next section and apply the concepts and principles explained in your own training regimen.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT

Typical Individual Movement Mistakes

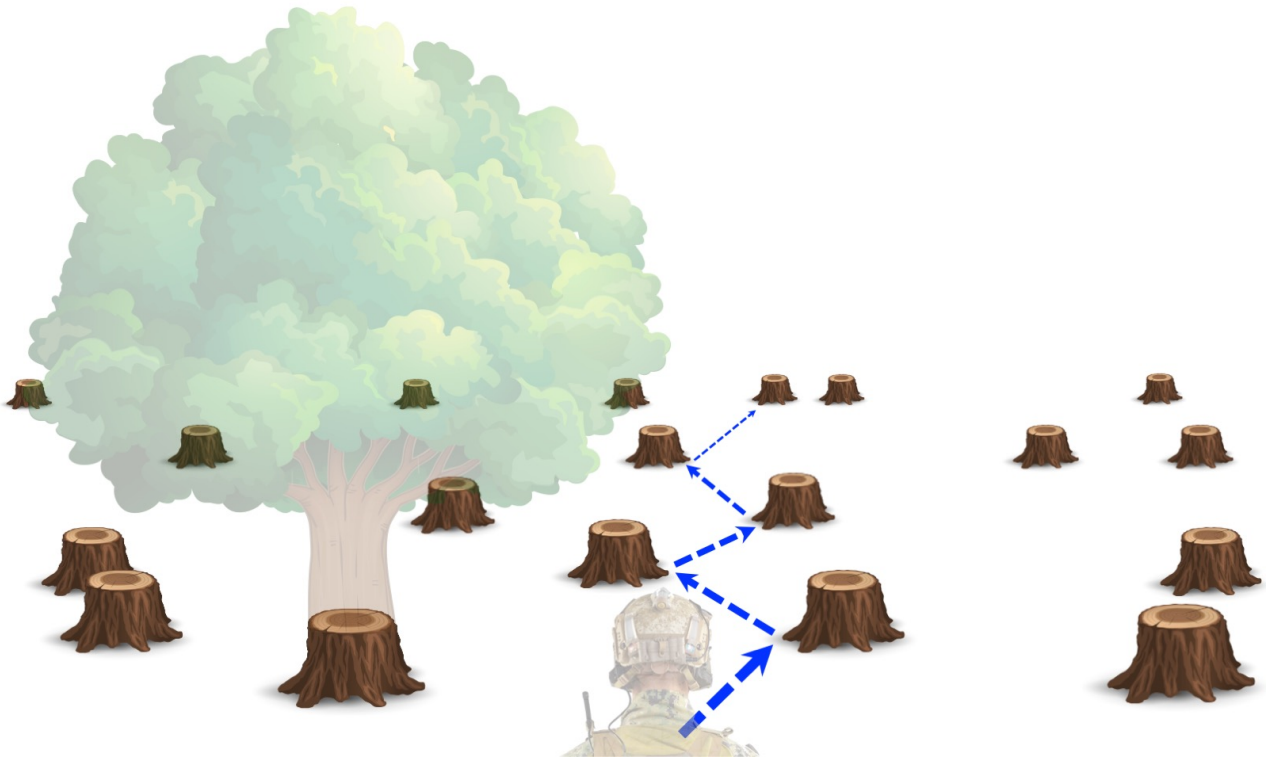
Even if a unit masters and correctly employs all of the movement formations and techniques discussed so far, they may still find themselves at a great disadvantage in combat against an adversary that knows how to apply movement formations and techniques to the reality of combat. One of the most common mistakes is to simply walk forward in a straight line without paying attention to the surrounding terrain. Individual squad members are either more concerned with maintaining the exact "shape" of the formation, or perhaps they are fatigued or not paying attention. Whatever the reason, if you find yourself walking in a straight line and the squad unexpectedly takes fire, you may find yourself in the open when the bullets start flying. This will bring up the question of whether you should immediately dive to the ground, or sprint to the nearest cover and then go to the ground. Ideally, with more forward thinking and better individual movement techniques, you would not even have to make that decision. The image below illustrates how an individual squad member can walk forward in a straight line without regard for cover, concealment and the surrounding terrain.



COMBAT APPLICATIONS: INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT

Moving from Cover to Cover

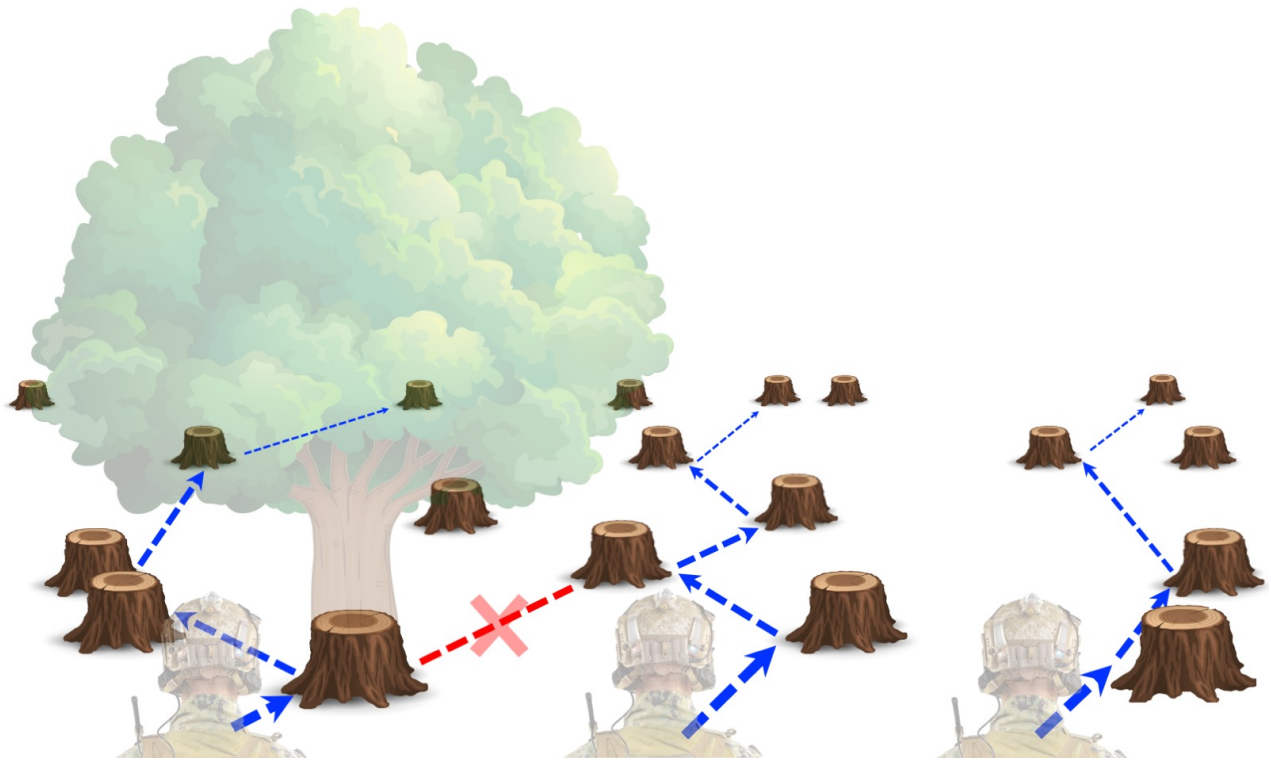
It is better for every individual squad member to move from cover to cover, even when walking through the woods when enemy contact is not likely. Using the same diagram from the previous page, if you had moved a few meters to your left you would have been walking along a path with plenty of available covered positions. You don't actually need to take cover behind each of these positions but should you come under fire at any given moment, you are either already behind cover and all you have to do is get down, or you are already moving towards the next piece of cover and you will not be caught in the open for long.



COMBAT APPLICATIONS: INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT

Moving from Cover to Cover as a Unit

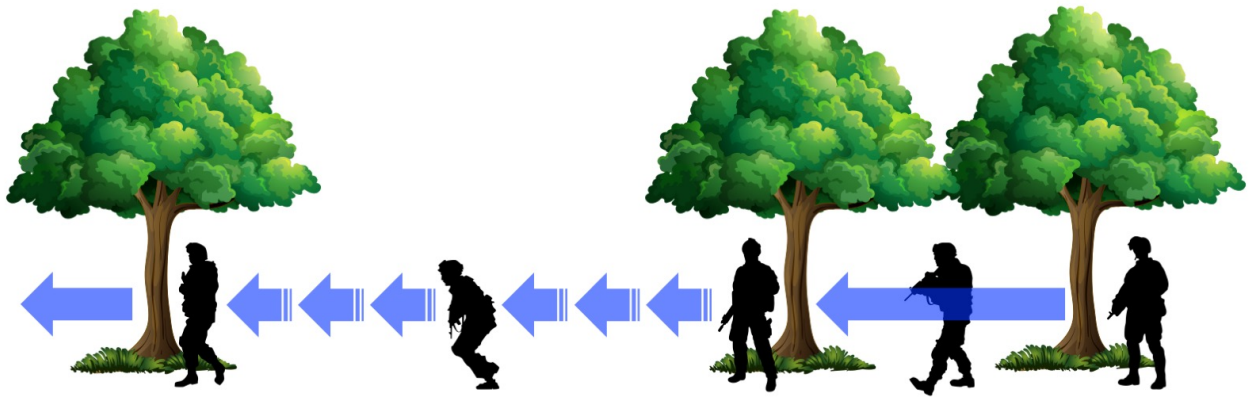
When moving as a unit, each individual unit member should use the same movement technique of proceeding from one covered position to another. The team or squad can still maintain its formation, spacing and general orientation but positioning will fluctuate as needed based on the surrounding terrain. When moving from cover to cover as a unit, you must also consider where your teammates may take cover. For example, in the illustration below, the team member on the far left should not move along the dotted red line and take cover behind the tree to his/her front right. Even though there might not be anything wrong with taking cover behind that tree when moving as an individual, when moving as a team you must consider that the team member to your right will move to that tree. While it is possible for two team member to take cover behind the same object, it is generally preferable to stay spread out if possible.



COMBAT APPLICATIONS: INDIVIDUAL MOVEMENT

Altering Movement Speed Based on the Terrain

When moving from cover to cover, you shouldn't just change direction, you should also change speed. Pick up the pace between cover and slow down when you are close to cover. If there are big gaps you may even want to run. Speeding up between covered positions reduces the amount of time you spend exposed in the open. However, when you are moving fast, it is harder to spot movement around you and harder to hear the enemy. So, when you are moving fast, you might as well focus your attention on the path in front of you, watching out for obstacles and ensuring you do not trip. Then, when you slow down next to each cover, take that time to carefully look around you for the enemy. You can even momentarily stop to look and listen for signs of enemy presence. Before you speed up again and move to the next covered position, quickly make eye contact with your fellow teammates to ensure no one is trying to signal you or drifting out of contact. Finally, identify the next covered position before you speed up, then pick up the pace to reach the next covered position.



COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Looking for the Enemy – What to Expect

As already discussed in the previous section, whenever you slow down or stop when moving near a piece of cover, you should focus your attention on looking for the enemy. However, to truly be effective at spotting enemies on the battlefield, you must do a lot more than simply "keep your head on a swivel" as conventional wisdom would suggest. When most people keep their head on a swivel they are subconsciously looking for (or expecting to see) the image on the lower left. However, in reality, a more skilled and competent enemy might look more like the image on the lower right. The only way you are going to detect the enemy on the lower right is not by swinging your head around on a swivel, but by knowing exactly where to look and focusing on that spot to identify any small inconsistencies in color, glare, movement, shadow or outline.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Where Not to Look – Open/Clear Areas

When you keep your head on a swivel, you are looking at everything around you. However, most of what is around you is not worth too much of your attention, at least nothing more than a quick glance. For example, the picture below shows a typical wooded area that is relatively open and free of vegetation. The large trees provide good cover should you make contact with the enemy. There are a number of places where enemies could be hiding in this picture but there are also many places where the enemy is most likely not hiding.

Unless you are facing an enemy that operates in subterranean tunnels or buries himself, there are most likely no threats in the open area that is plainly visible around you, marked in red in the image below. While you should not completely ignore this area, you can focus your attention on areas where the enemy is more likely to be hiding.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Where Not to Look – Isolated Cover

Another place where enemies are less likely to be hiding is behind pieces of isolated cover. The reason for this is because while isolated cover might provide good protection and concealment initially, it doesn't offer any safe route of retreat. If you hide behind a piece of isolated cover when adversaries are close by you are essentially stuck there and it is only a matter of time before you get flanked. Most enemies will not want to put themselves in this position. Pieces of isolated cover also present less of a threat because there are only so many enemies that can hide behind a single isolated tree, rock or log. For all of these reasons, when searching for the enemy, you can focus less of your attention on isolated cover. However, it is important to remember that not all enemies might be smart or rational and some may have no fear of sacrificing themselves to kill a few members of your unit. Such enemies might have no problem hiding behind isolated cover, waiting for you to pass by and then opening fire or tossing a grenade, knowing their chances of escape are minimal. Therefore, depending on the environment and the nature of your enemy, you still may need to remain aware of potential threats hiding behind isolated cover.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Where Not to Look – Brush with No Cover

While it is not impossible, it is less likely that enemies will hide in thick bushes that provide no actual cover or protection from bullets. There are several reasons for this. First, smarter, more competent enemies will try to take advantage of both cover and concealment, not just concealment. Second, finding a good prone firing position in very thick bushes or briars can be difficult. In most cases when you lie down, you won't be able to see more than a foot in front of you because bushes are blocking your view. If you move far enough forward to see more clearly, the bushes will no longer be masking your position. It can also be uncomfortable to lie down in thick brush for long periods and difficult to change positions or adjust your aim. For all of these reasons, enemies will tend not to lie tangled in the middle of bushes with no cover. However, skilled enemies can camouflage carefully prepared, dug-in or fortified positions to look like natural brush. Less skilled enemies may also hide behind bushes, even though doing so provides them little cover or observation. So, you should not completely discount bushes when searching for the enemy.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

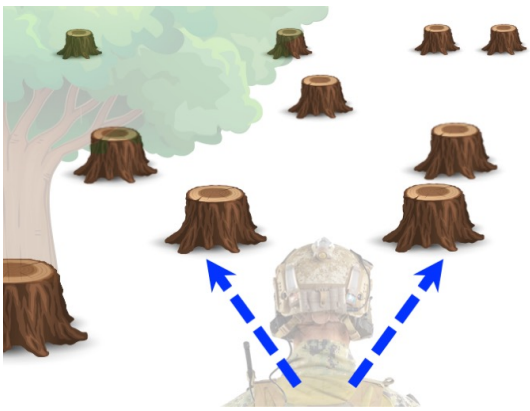
Looking for the Enemy – Most Likely Enemy Positions

Open/clear areas, isolated cover and brush with no cover are just a few examples of places where the enemy is less likely to be hiding. As you search for the enemy, use common sense and past tactical experience to anticipate the locations where the enemy is most likely to be, then focus on those areas carefully. Look for small inconsistencies in color, glare, movement, shadow or outline. Look for disturbed earth, overturned leaves, broken or disturbed branches, flattened grass, moss scraped off rocks or trees etc. You may not be close enough to see such small details but do your best to identify even the smallest signs of enemy presence. Returning to the picture below, having ruled out the less likely places where an enemy could be hiding, we can zero in on two spots that present a greater threat. The two areas marked in green near the large fallen logs offer a combination of cover and concealment where more than one person could hide. It would also be easier for enemies hiding in these locations to pull back or break contact, particularly in the location on the left. While skilled enemies would know it is not always ideal to pop up and fire over a fallen log (because popping your head up over a piece of cover makes you easier to spot) they might stay low to the ground and shoot around the log or use a combination of cover provided by the log and nearby trees, along with concealment provided by bushes. This is an example of the type of enemy activity you should be looking for around the two fallen logs. It is also important to remember that even if you do not spot the enemy before he opens fire, by using the techniques just described you will have a must better chance of pinpointing the enemy after he opens fire. In many cases, infantry units come under fire and it takes a while to identify where the fire is coming from. This process speeds up if you are already expecting the fire to come from specific locations and know where to look.

COMBAT APPLICATIONS: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Looking for the Enemy – Planning Your Reaction

Once you determine the locations where the enemy is most likely to be hiding, you should use that information to help you decide where to seek cover should you take fire from that direction. You may choose to alter your path towards a different piece of cover that offers better protection in the direction of greatest threat. In some cases you might identify two pieces of cover, one that provides better protection against an attack from the right and one that offers better protection against an attack from the left. The more you can use your brain, anticipate enemy actions and prepare to react quickly, the better your chances of survival should you come under fire. However, it is also important not to overthink the situation and try to pre-plan every action in response to every possibility. When you first practice going through the process explained above including moving from cover to cover, looking for the enemy and planning your reactions accordingly, you might feel overwhelmed or confused, just as shooting a weapon or performing a hand-to-hand fighting movement can seem awkward at first. However, the goal is for all of these thoughts and actions to become instinctive or second nature. When you walk by a potential threat area to your left, you will instinctively feel exposed and gravitate towards a piece of cover that protects you from that direction. The goal is to develop a "game sense" for combat just as skilled athletes develop a game sense for their sport.



TACTICAL MOVEMENT
Route Planning and Navigation

Movement formations and movement techniques govern how the squad moves as a unit through its immediate surroundings. Choosing the ideal movement formation and movement technique helps ensure the squad is in the most advantageous possible position should it make unexpected contact with enemy forces. However, movement formations and techniques are only half of the equation. The other half is choosing the best possible route or path over the terrain. Even if you expertly employ movement formations and techniques, if you choose to move through an exposed open field or get bogged down in a swamp, you may place yourself at a disadvantage.

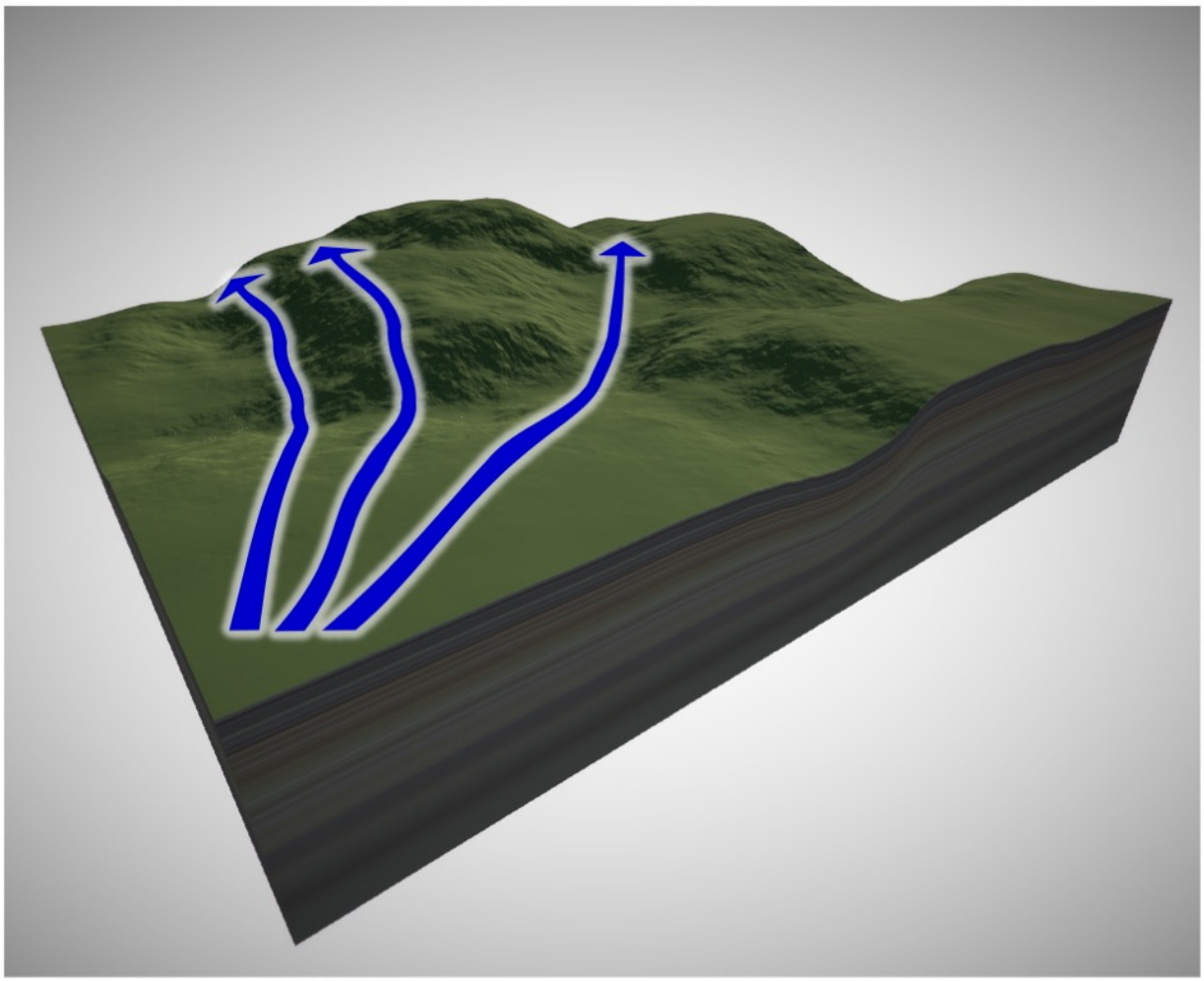
The best possible route depends on many factors. However, the most important factor is your assigned mission. If the mission objective is to search and attack enemy forces, a more exposed route with better observation and fields of fire might be the best option since after all you are not trying to avoid enemy contact. There are other situations where a more exposed route might be preferable. One example is a presence patrol in a counterinsurgency operation where physical presence or deterrence is critical. Another example is a mission where speed is critical, calling for movement over unrestricted terrain.

While taking a more exposed route with better observation might be appropriate for some missions, other missions might call for taking maximum advantage of concealment. If the objective is to infiltrate enemy territory and avoid detection, a route through densely vegetated low ground might be ideal. This route might be much slower and offer very limited observation. However, based on the mission requirements these disadvantages are not relevant. The most important factor is avoiding detection and minimizing exposure.

Many other mission-related and environmental factors can influence which route is best in a given situation. For example, when operating at night, moving at the base of a hill can offer better observation of your surroundings. This is because it is easier to look up and see enemies silhouetted against the sky than it is to look down and see enemies in the darker low ground. Therefore, if a mission is primarily going to take place at night, it might be better to plan a route along the low ground than on the high ground. However, if you know that vegetation or marsh

in your area of operations makes the low ground impassible you may have to adjust your route accordingly. In summary, the best route for one mission might be completely different than the best route for another mission, even if the start and end points are the same.

The illustration below gives an example of the options just discussed. The route on the far right passes through low ground and might be a good choice for infiltrating undetected into enemy territory. The route in the middle is over higher ground which is more exposed but offers better observation and fields of fire for a search and attack or presence patrol. Finally, the route on the left still takes advantage of the terrain but runs along the base of the hill, making it a potentially good route for a night mission. Each of the three routes might be a good choice in a different situation.

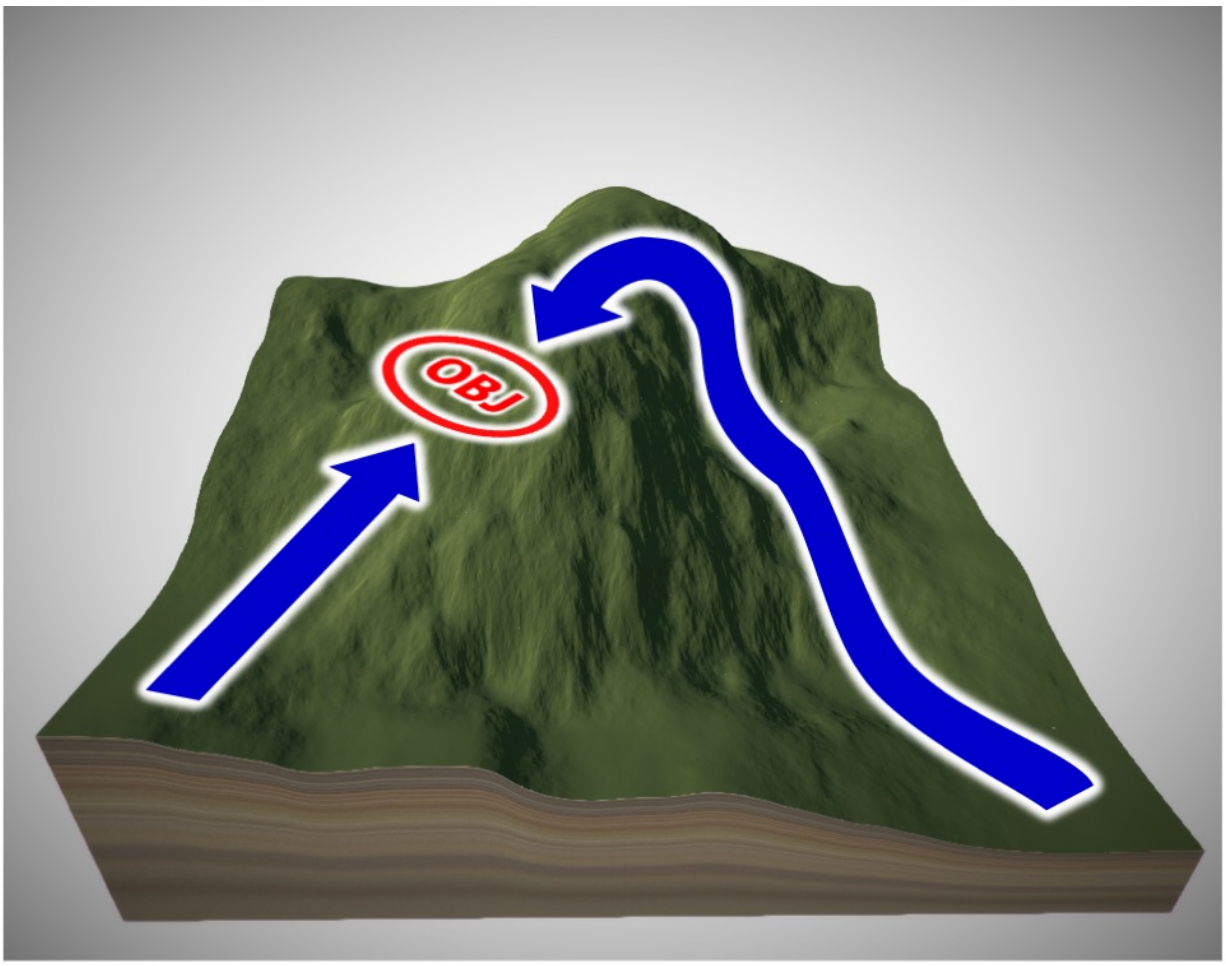


The Indirect Approach

One of the most important principles in route planning is the concept of the indirect approach. In the terrain example below, your mission is to assault an objective on the face of a hill. The slope approaching the objective head-on is fairly gentle. To the right of the objective (as oriented in the image) are steep, rocky cliffs. What is the most effective approach to the objective?

Approaching the objective head on is clearly easier. That approach will allow for greater speed of movement, better fields of fire, greater control and less fatigue. However, because this approach is the easiest and most likely, it is also the approach the enemy will expect you to take, meaning it will be the most carefully observed and most heavily defended.

Flanking around to the right forces you to negotiate very difficult terrain, scaling steep cliffs to reach the objective. Movement will be slow, dangerous and you will be seriously vulnerable when scaling the cliffs. However, because the approach is so difficult, the enemy might not expect you to attempt it. They may leave the cliffs undefended and you will take the enemy by surprise.



The indirect approach is not always the best option. However, history has proven that the indirect approach often proves more effective than the direct approach and affords greater surprise. The term "indirect approach" was first coined by Basil Liddell-Hart, an interwar British military officer and theorist who contributed greatly to modern military thinking. In the words of Liddell-Hart, "Throughout the ages, effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponent's unreadiness to meet it…In strategy, the longest way round is often the shortest way home."

There are many historical examples of how the indirect approach contributed to victory in battle. In December 1943, the 1st Special Service Force used the indirect approach to destroy German gun positions on Mont La Difensa which were considered invincible. The Germans left one approach undefended because it was a sheer cliff that was thought unscalable. Using their mountaineering expertise, the 1st Special Service Force scaled the cliffs, catching the Germans completely by surprise and destroying the gun positions.

While scaling cliffs is one of the most commonly used examples of the indirect approach, there are many ways you can surprise the enemy by choosing a route that is more difficult. In World War I, T.E. Lawrence surprised the Turks at Akaba by crossing a supposedly uncrossable desert with indigenous forces riding camels. The Germans surprised the French in 1940 by driving tanks through the densely wooded Ardennes Forrest which the French had assumed was impassible by tanks. There are many ways to use the indirect approach to achieve surprise and avoid the strength of the enemy defense. Therefore, it is always important to consider the advantages of the indirect approach when planning a route to an objective.

Cover/Concealment vs. Observation/Fields-of-Fire

In general, as cover and concealment improve, observation and fields of fire decrease, and vice versa. It is rare to have both good cover/concealment and good observation/fields of fire. It is possible to have both excellent observation and good cover, but that generally requires digging in or establishing defensive positions.

In discussing these factors, it is first critical to differentiate between the definitions of cover and concealment. Cover provides protection from bullets, shrapnel and other types of hostile weapons or fire. Concealment only provides protection from enemy observation, not enemy bullets. So, for example a very large tree or stone provides good cover since it can stop bullets. A thick bush might provide good concealment but provides virtually no cover since bullets can pass through a bush easily.

While these distinctions seem obvious, it is common for even experienced fighters to mistake concealment for cover, falsely believing they are safe from enemy fire just because the enemy cannot see them. One common example of this in urban combat involves tactics that call for taking cover behind walls inside a building. In most cases, interior walls are not bulletproof and if you attempt to use them as cover the enemy will likely just shoot you through the wall.

In rural terrain, the availability and nature of cover and concealment typically follows predictable patterns. Higher ground generally offers better cover because if you notice, the biggest trees generally grow on higher ground. Large rock formations that provide excellent cover can also be easier to find on higher ground. However, higher ground is typically more open, less vegetated and moving on higher ground can sometimes skyline you against an illuminated background. Therefore, higher ground typically offers less concealment than lower ground.

The lower ground generally offers better concealment because of the thick brush and bushes that live on the low ground. Water runs downhill and it is therefore common for many small plants to grow in the low ground. However, because there is often less sunlight on the low ground, it can be less common for large trees to grow there, meaning there is generally less cover on low ground. The thick brush of the low ground provides little protection against bullets and shrapnel. In summary, high ground generally provides better cover but less concealment while low ground provides better concealment but less cover.

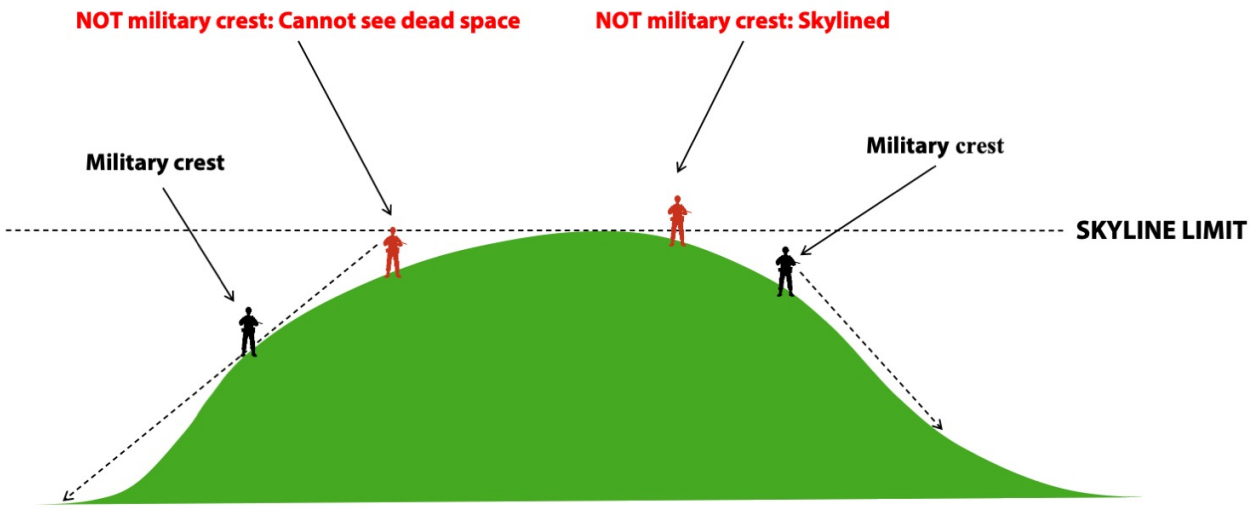
Because of all the factors just discussed, high ground also typically offers better mobility, observation and fields of fire. Because there is less brush to negotiate on high ground and the earth is firm and dry, it is easier to move quickly across high ground. The lack of vegetation and higher vantage point also provide better observation and field of fire from the high-ground. Moving through low ground can be more difficulty and often requires cutting your way through briars and the ground is often wet or swampy. There are of course exceptions to all of these trends but understanding common patterns in the nature of terrain on high ground and low ground can be very useful for route planning.

Think about where you have the best observation? Standing on top of a hill in the open, where you are also very exposed.

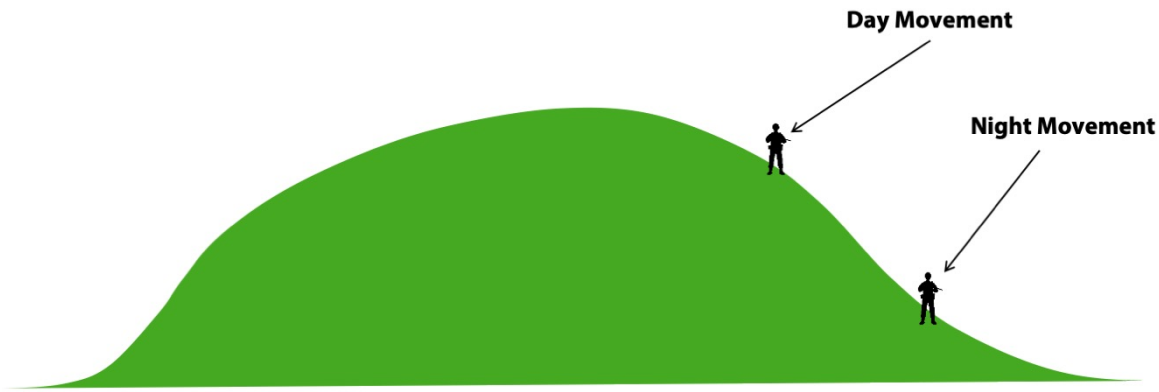
And where do you have the best cover and concealment? In a cave, hole or draw where your observation is almost zero.

The Military Crest

In hours of daylight, it is best to move on the military crest of a hill. The military crest is as high on the hill as possible without skylining yourself, but low enough so that there is no dead space further down the hill. In the example on the lower left, one of the troops is on the military crest but the other one is too high up the hill to see all the way down the face of the hill. There is dead at the base of the hill where enemies could be hiding. In the example on the lower left, one of the troops is on the military crest but the other is too high up the hill and is skylining himself above the horizon.



While it is best to move on the military crest in daylight, it can be beneficial to move further down the hill during hours of darkness. At night, the best way to detect the enemy is often to see him against the sky or to hear him. Therefore, at night it can be helpful to move as far towards the low ground as possible without getting caught up in the noisy, thick brush. This allows you to look up the hill and see enemies approaching from the higher ground while it is difficult for them to look into the dark low ground and see you.



In some environments the low ground is also more damp which means it can be less noisy to move across. On damp ground there are fewer dry sticks and twigs you can break under your feet. Also, since there are generally fewer large trees growing on low ground, that means there will be fewer dry leaves to rustle and make noise as you walk through them. For all of these reasons, moving on the low ground can be quieter at night and offer you better chances of spotting nearby enemies.

Tactical Use of Terrain and Land Navigation

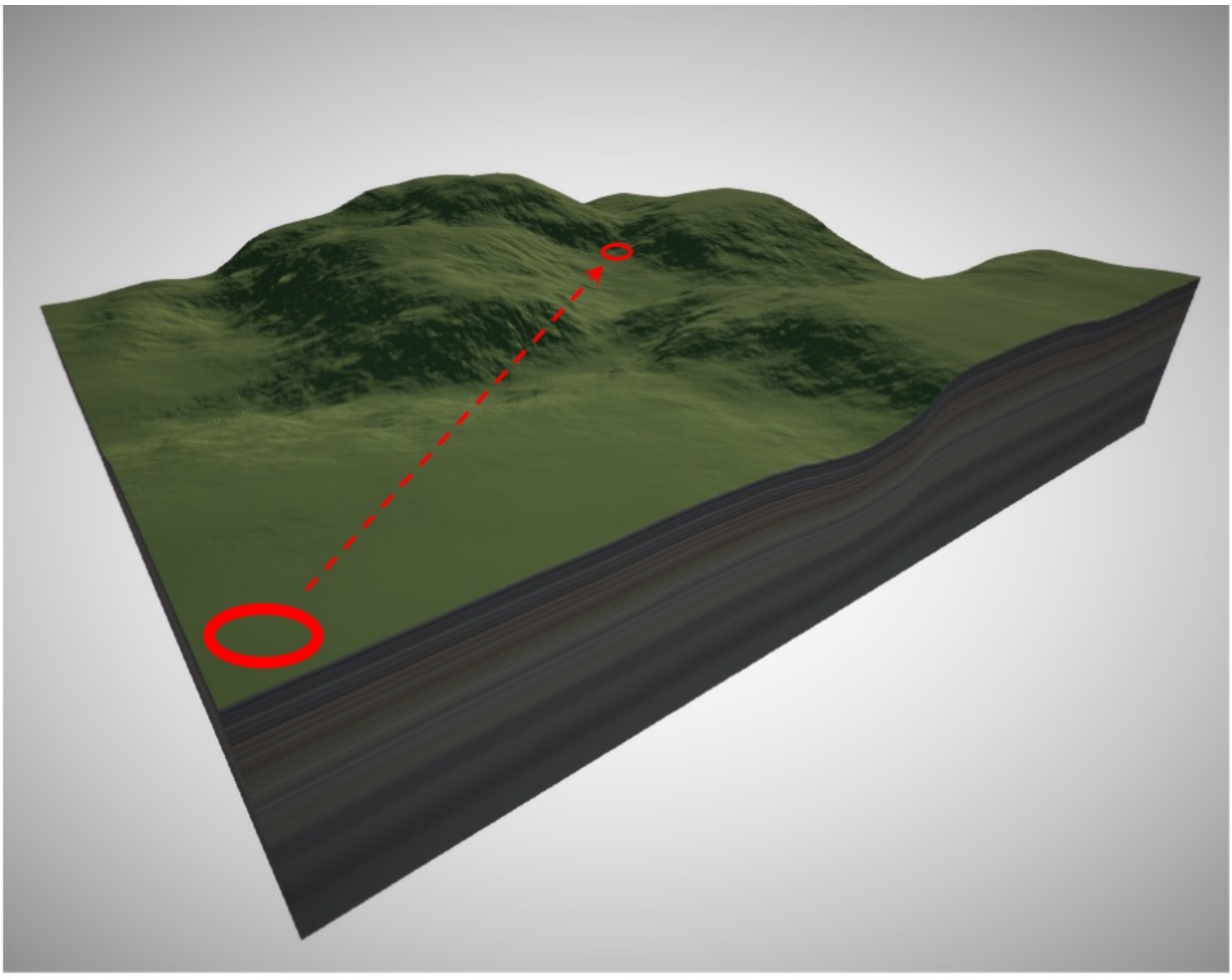
The concepts in this chapter help you use terrain to your advantage in different situations and how to navigate from one point to another while maintaining the tactical edge. Tactical use of terrain and ease of travel/navigation can sometimes run counter to each other. For example, the easiest way to navigate from point A to point B is often to walk along a road or navigate between the largest, most obvious terrain features. However, these options are both not ideal in most tactical situations when you are trying to maintain security and avoid detection by the enemy.

While moving down an open road is generally not the best option, you still must be able to identify terrain features around you to know where you are and where you are going. In order to be effective as a combat unit, you must learn to do this reliably and effectively while still maintaining the tactical advantage. There are certain techniques and tricks to keep yourself oriented while moving tactically in rural terrain. These techniques become particularly important at night and in low visibility conditions when infantry missions are most likely to take place. These techniques include the use of checkpoints, handrails and backstops.

ROUTE PLANNING: STRAIGHT LINE MOVEMENT

Disadvantages of Straight-Line Movement

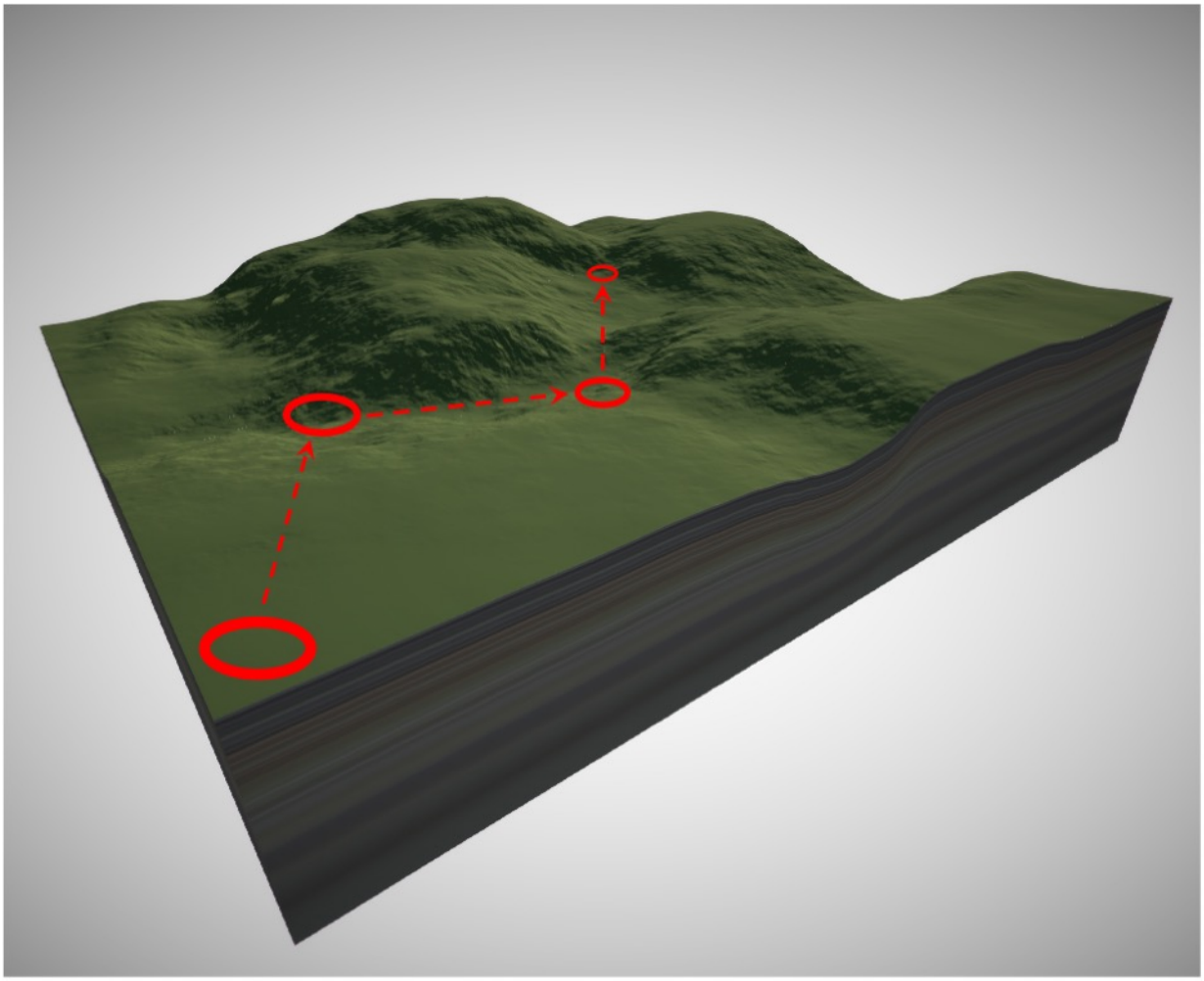
When moving from one point to another in the field, less experienced units often move in a straight line using "dead reckoning." Dead reckoning involves using a map to identify a distance and direction (azimuth) to an objective, then using a compass and pace count to move exactly that distance on that azimuth. While this method of navigation makes planning and execution simple, there are several reasons why is it generally not a good idea to move in a straight line. First, when you move in a straight line it is easier for the enemy to track you, attack you, or predict your destination. If the enemy can predict your location in the future they can set an ambush for you or call in artillery on your formation. Second, if you are moving in a straight line you are most likely not taking advantage of the terrain in the ways discussed earlier. Finally, in some cases it might be difficult to find a straight path that is free of obstacles and easy to travel. For all these reason, walking in a straight line is rarely the best option.



ROUTE PLANNING: CHECKPOINTS

Use of Checkpoints to Avoid a Straight Line Route

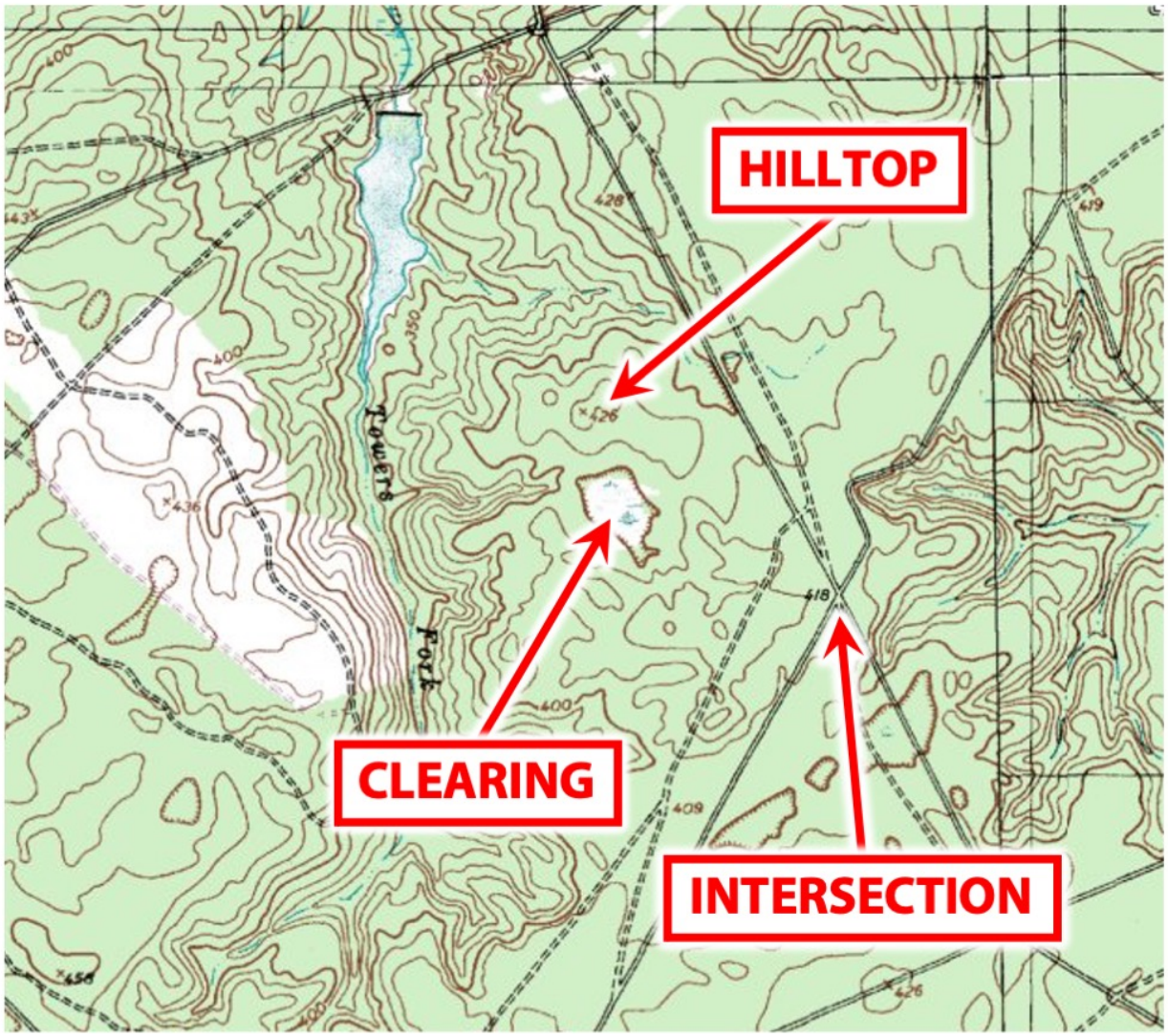
Instead of moving in a straight line to your objective or final destination, it is better to identify a series of checkpoints along your way and move from one checkpoint to another. A checkpoint (or waypoint) is an intermediate destination or stop along your route. Each leg of your route starts and ends with a checkpoint. When planning your route, you should identify the azimuth and distance for each of these legs, along with reference points and terrain features to help you orient yourself as you move. It is important to be able to pinpoint your exact location at any given time during your mission since you might need to unexpectedly change course, call in artillery or medical evacuation assets.



ROUTE PLANNING: CHECKPOINTS

Poor Choices for Checkpoints

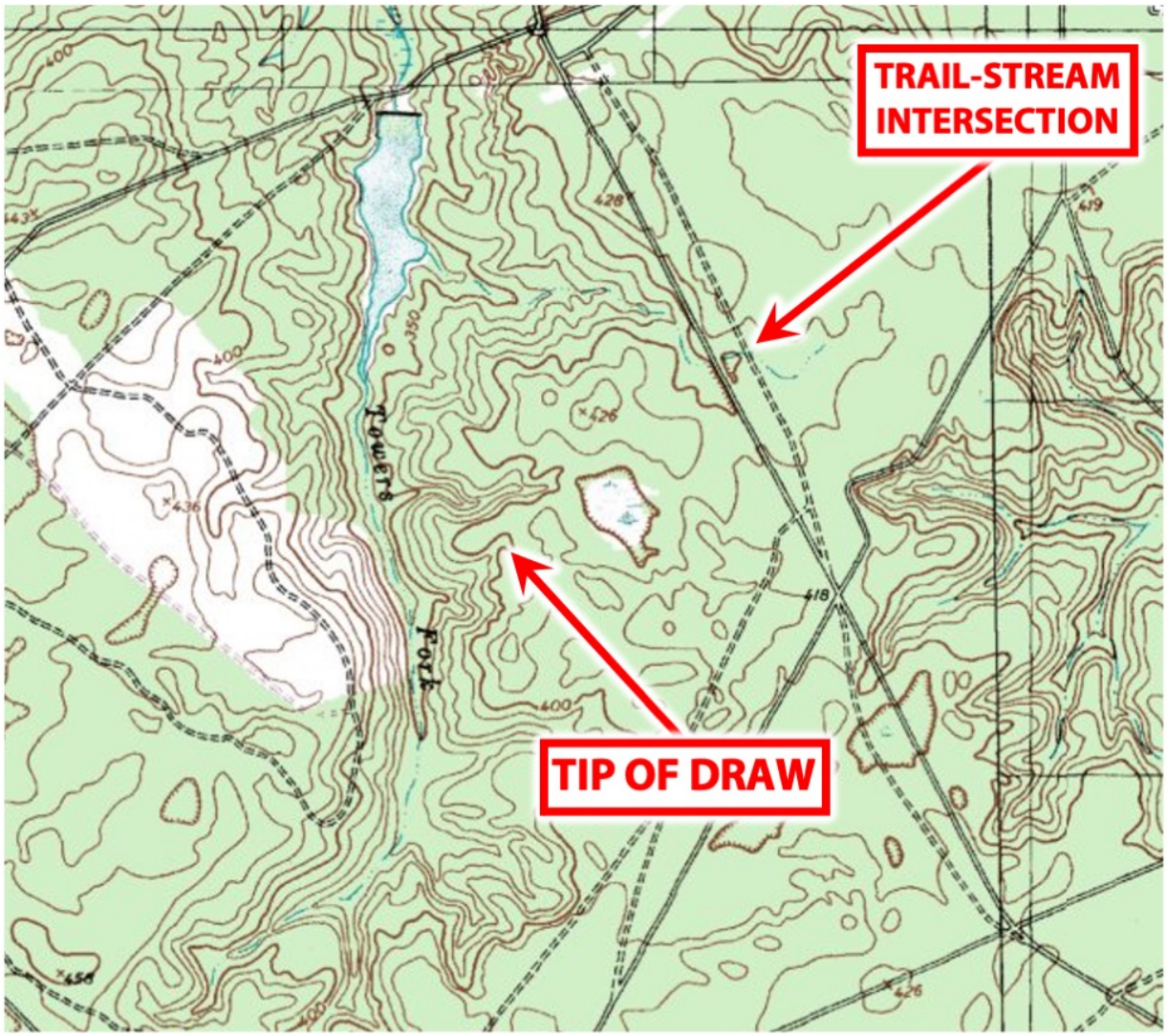
When selecting checkpoints for your mission route, one of the first things to know is what types of terrain features make bad choices for checkpoints. Some examples of poor checkpoint options include road intersections, open areas and hilltops. Inexperienced leaders often choose these terrain features as checkpoints because they are easy to identify on the map and easy to find on the ground. However, they are not good choices for checkpoints in a combat operation because they are all areas that are exposed and frequently trafficked by both enemy and civilians. Even if you don't walk right up on them, getting near them is still dangerous.



ROUTE PLANNING: CHECKPOINTS

Good Choices for Checkpoints

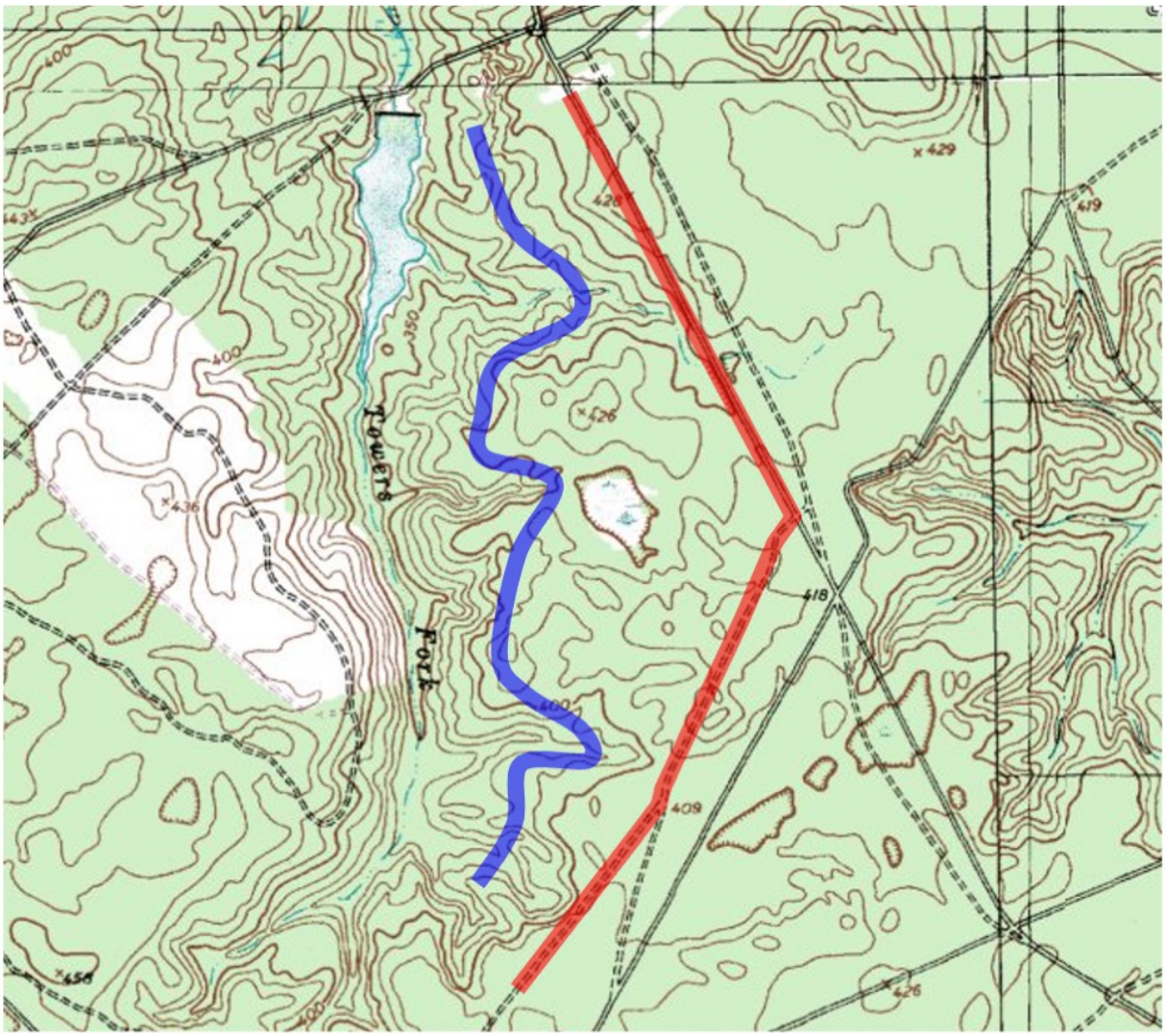
Good checkpoints can be difficult to find and there is no fixed formula for choosing good checkpoints. A good checkpoint needs to meet the contradictory criteria of being discrete enough to avoid enemy attention, but obvious enough for your unit to be able to find on the ground, often at night or in poor visibility conditions. Two terrain features that can sometimes meet these difficult criteria are trail-stream intersections (not ones that include bridges) and tips of draws. Each of these terrain features is still relatively easily identifiable, even in limited visibility, but they are also less exposed and less commonly occupied by enemy or civilians.



ROUTE PLANNING: HANDRAILS

Employ Handrails to Avoid Drifting Off Course

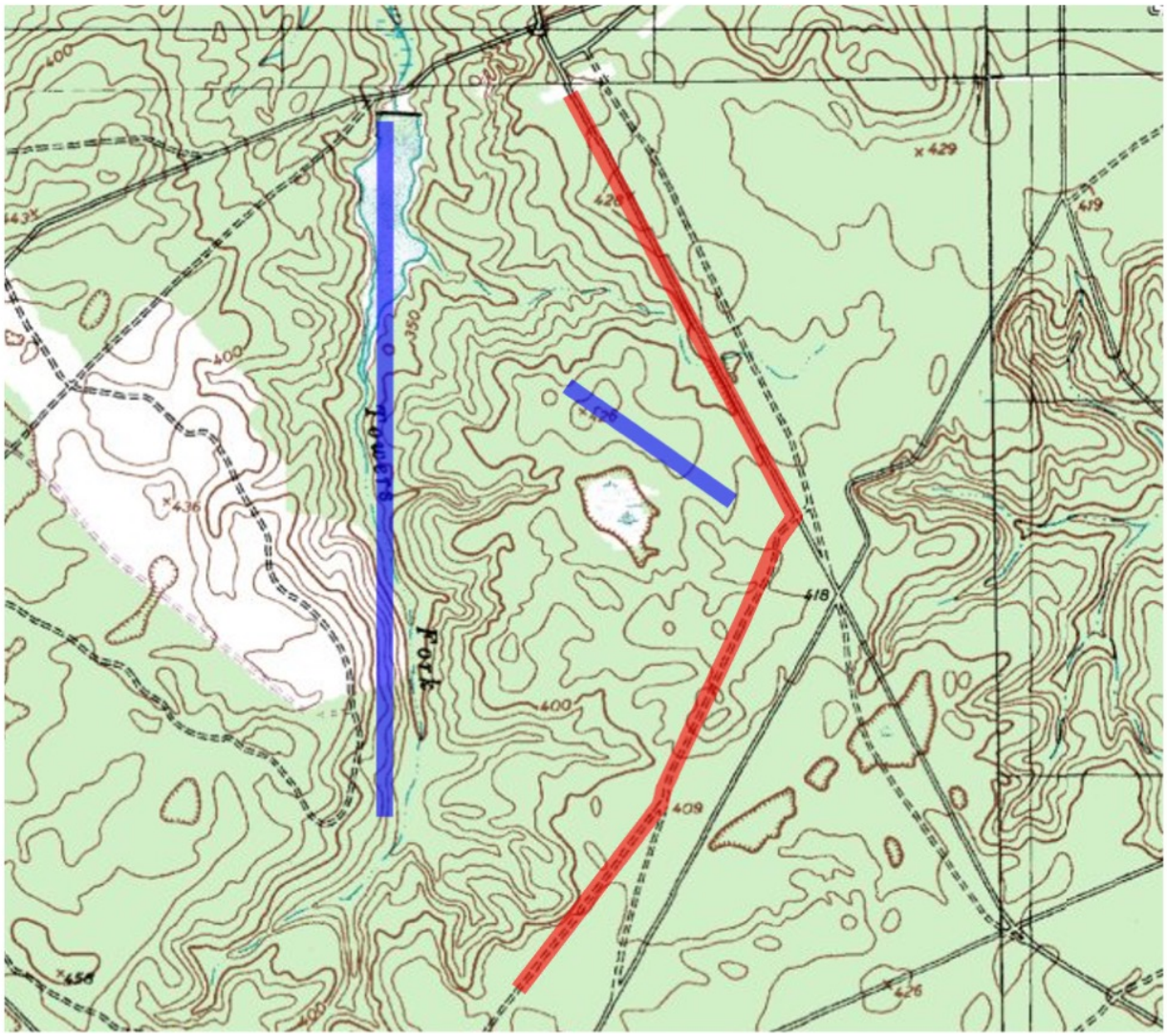
A handrail is a linear, easily identifiable terrain feature that you keep within view to your left or right to stay on course. If you lose sight of the handrail or accidentally bump into it, you know you are drifting off course. Some terrain features make good handrails and some do not. Roads are bad handrails. They are frequently traveled by enemy and civilians, staying near them is dangerous. Draws or low-ground make good handrails. They are still easy to identify (you can't cross them without knowing) but they are less visited by civilians or enemy. On the map below, the road (market in red) would make a poor handrail but the edge of the low ground (marked in blue) would make a better handrail.



ROUTE PLANNING: BACKSTOPS

Employ Backstops to Avoid Overshooting the Objective

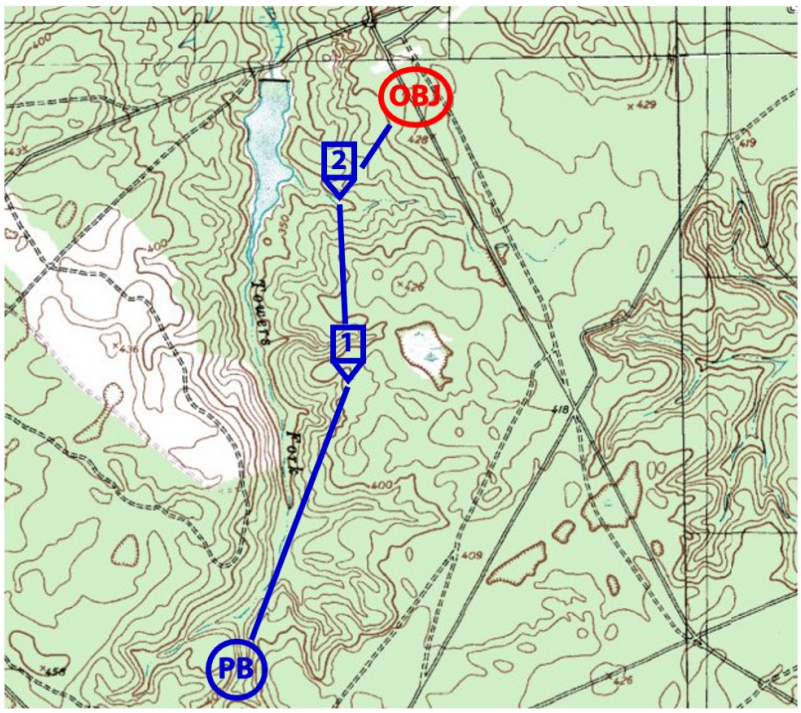
A backstop is a linear, easily identifiable terrain feature that lets you know when you have gone too far. As is the case with handrails, some types of terrain features make better backstops than others. A good backstop is a hilltop, ridgeline or low-ground. These terrain features don't change over time and they are still easy to identify. Roads and small streams make poor backstops. They change over time and the roads or streams on a map don't always match reality. On the map below the low-ground or ridgeline marked in blue would make a good backstop. The trail/road marked in red would not be a good choice for a backstop.



ROUTE PLANNING: COMPLETING THE ROUTE

Combining Checkpoints, Legs, Handrails and Backstops

Combining all of the points already discussed on how to use terrain to your advantage and how to plan a route, the ultimate objective is to be able to plan a route with a series of checkpoints and legs from a start point to an objective. Ideally the route should make maximum use of the terrain and include control measures such as handrails and backstops. The map and route plan below are not to scale and serve only as an example. The route goes from a patrol base to an ambush objective and includes two checkpoints. The grid coordinates for both the start point, end point and checkpoints are specified, along with the distance and azimuth between each point. The plan also includes handrails and backstops. Once again, the map, map graphics and navigational data are generalized and are meant only as an example.



PATROL BASE
GRID: 2135 4525

DISTANCE: 3150 m
AZIMUTH: 021°
LEFT HANDRAIL: Lowground

CP 1
GRID: 2196 4877

DISTANCE: 1240 m
AZIMUTH: 356°
LEFT HANDRAIL: Lowground

CP 2
GRID: 2183 5024
BACKSTOP: Spur

DISTANCE: 680 m
AZIMUTH: 035°

OBJ
GRID: 2249 5099

BATTLECRAFT
Traditional Battle Drills

Movement formations, movement techniques and tactical route planning all help ensure that your squad is in the most advantageous possible position if you make contact with the enemy. The next step is knowing what to do when you actually make contact and the bullets are flying. For many modern military forces, the answer to this question begins with a battle drill. In general terms, a battle drill is a standardized set of actions or procedures designed to allow a unit to rapidly react to enemy contact without needing a deliberate decision-making process. Having a pre-planned, pre-rehearsed response to enemy action allows a unit to react quickly and retain the initiative.

The concept of the battle drill was originally developed by the great military thinker Sir Basil Liddell Hart who served in the British Army during World War I and in the interwar period. Battle drills have evolved over the years and form a critical part of modern tactical doctrine. However, we would argue that while the logic of battle drills is sound and important to know, the way battle drills are frequently taught can lead to inflexibility and may be confusing or problematic when trying to achieve optimal results in combat. Therefore, in the next section we review the concept of the battle drill and examples of common battle drill principles as a starting point for discussing more flexible approaches to fire and maneuver.

The Logic of Battle Drills

While this manual aims to move beyond rigid application of pre-rehearsed battle drills and identify some of the shortcomings in battle drill doctrine, it is first import to understand the intended logic behind battle drills. The main reason why battle drills prove less effective in combat is because practitioners often misunderstand how battle drills are supposed to be used. When understood and applied properly, battle drills are not incompatible with the concepts, tactics, techniques and procedures covered in this book. However, as they are commonly

misunderstood and incorrectly applied, battle drills can lead to less flexible, less effective combat units.

Like all doctrine, battle drills are not intended as a rigid prescription that must be followed to the letter. Battle drills are a guideline or start point upon which to build and adjust your tactics based on the situation. The problem is that while they may not be intended to be followed as a rigid process, that is often the way they are written in manuals. Readers often glance over the comments in the introductory paragraphs that state that battle drills are a guideline and skip directly to the steps, which are presented in a fairly rigid, prescriptive manner.

The second, often misunderstood logic of battle drills is that they are primarily designed to buy time for leaders to make a better, more flexible decision based on the situation. In combat, freezing or failing to act/respond quickly is never beneficial. Initiative and aggressive action alone is sometimes enough to secure victory in battle. However, in infantry combat, it can sometimes take time for a leader to fully understand the situation, let alone make a decision and execute a course of action. The idea behind a battle drill is that it gives the unit something to execute (or begin executing) right away in order to retain the initiative and keep the enemy off balance while the leader gathers information, assesses the situation and comes up with a course of action.

Once again, while this logic makes sense, it is often misunderstood. However, when presented in a slightly different way with a few modifications, the same core logic behind battle drills becomes easier to grasp and apply in real combat scenarios. More importantly, execution becomes more flexible which means momentum is less likely to break down in highly stressful, rapidly changing combat conditions.

Battle Drills vs. Battlecraft

In this book, we attempt to frame battle drills as they were originally intended to be framed, as guidelines for more creative action and as starting points to retain the initiative and buy time for the leader to make a decision. Rather than simply offering the steps of a battle drill as a fixed prescription, in the next chapter we will outline the steps for a typical battle drill and then go on to discuss some potential disadvantages that might come from executing the battle drill exactly according to the prescribed steps.

The following chapters will then discuss “immediate action response” (the term we use for immediate action drill) which is essentially smaller, more flexible versions of the traditional battle drill that still accomplish the battle drill’s main objective of offering a starting point to buy time for the leader to make a decision. The next sections will then essentially break down the component parts of the battle drill and expand upon them in a discussion of fire and maneuver with either two elements or three elements.

We consider this approach to learning battle drills, immediate action, fire and maneuver to be more conducive to flexibility and creative thinking. We use the term “battlecraft” to describe this approach, drawing from another British military term from the World War II era. We chose the term battlecraft because the term “craft” suggests a deeper, more complex

understanding or artform beyond a rigid drill or process. Battle drills, an understanding of them and how to apply them forms one component of battlecraft. Immediate action response training, fire and maneuver, tactical use of terrain and close combat tactics also are component parts of the larger discipline of battlecraft.

As we have already discussed, while there are many books and schools that cover infantry doctrine, the actual discipline of knowing how to fight and defeat the enemy on the battlefield is often overlooked and could be considered a lost art in some ways. Battlecraft offers a new term to describe a new way of thinking about infantry combat and the real-world tactics, techniques and skills required to win on the battlefield.

TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

The standard squad level battle drill taught by the U.S. Army and many other allied military forces could be described as a suppress and flank battle drill. The squad will usually start off moving in column formation with one team in the lead and one team in trail. When the lead team makes contact with the enemy it will come on-line facing the enemy and return fire.

TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

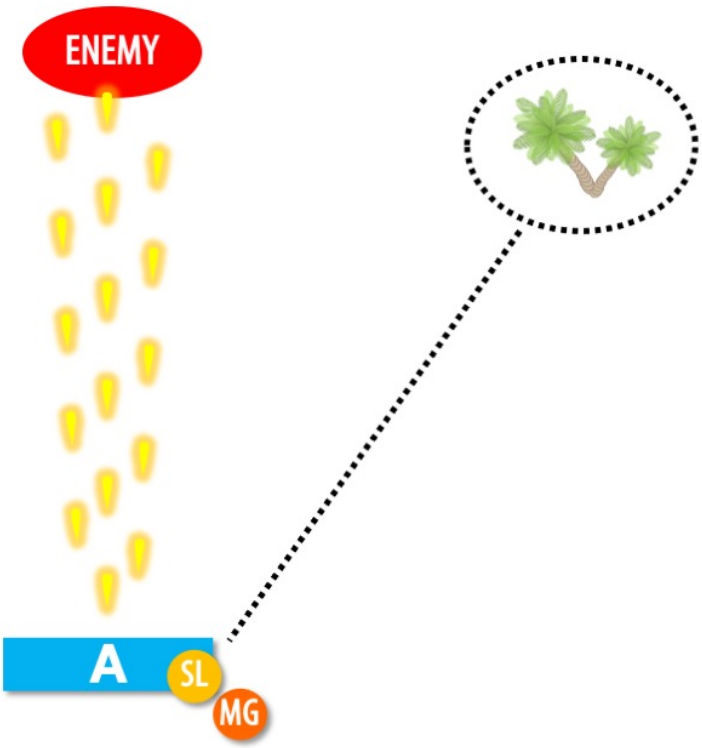
STEP 2: Squad Leader Communicates with Lead Team

At this point, the squad leader will communicate with the lead team, either by radio or by running up to the lead team to assess the situation. At this time, the squad leader will generally bring or send the machine gun up to support the firing line in contact. If the lead team has encountered a large enemy element the squad leader might decide to break contact. If the enemy is smaller the squad leader might decide to have the team in contact handle the situation, or bring up the trail team to flank around to the left or right.

TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 3: SL Identifies Movement Reference Points

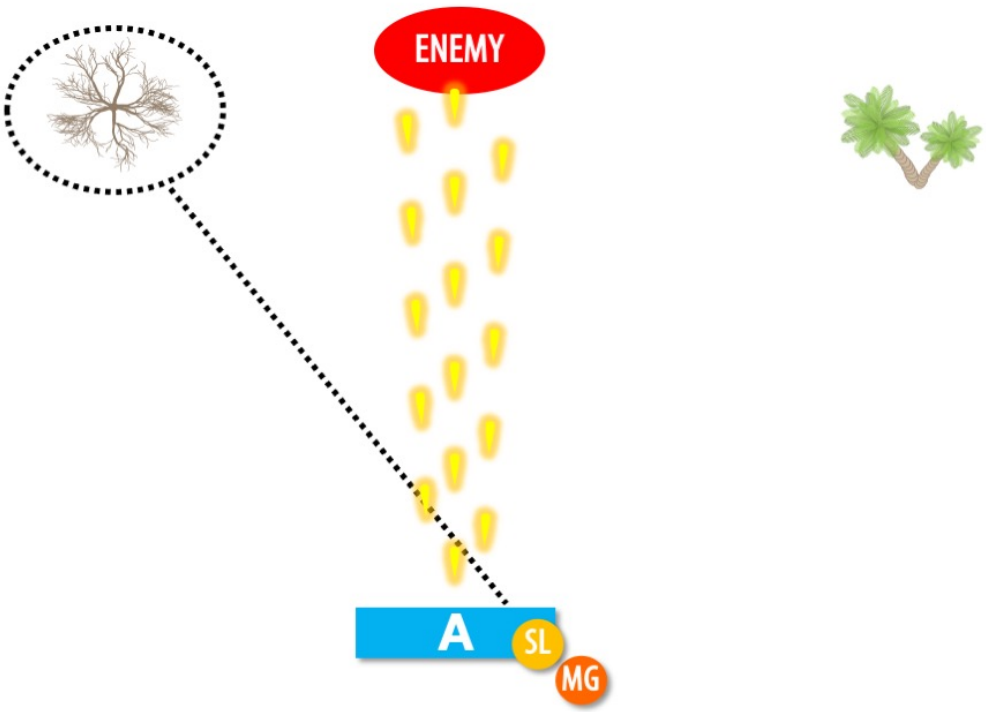
Before leaving the lead team, the squad leader will generally identify some reference points on the terrain in the direction of the enemy contact. While keeping track of one's location while flanking around to assault an enemy position might seem easy, it is not uncommon for flanking elements to get lost or even accidentally double back and shoot their own squad members, especially at night or in limited visibility. Identifying some terrain features or reference points leading to the enemy position can be helpful to keep the flanking element on track. If possible, try to choose reference points or terrain features that are unique and easily identifiable from multiple directions. Picking "a tree" as a reference point in a forest probably won't work.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 4: Squad Leader Designates Shift-Fire Point

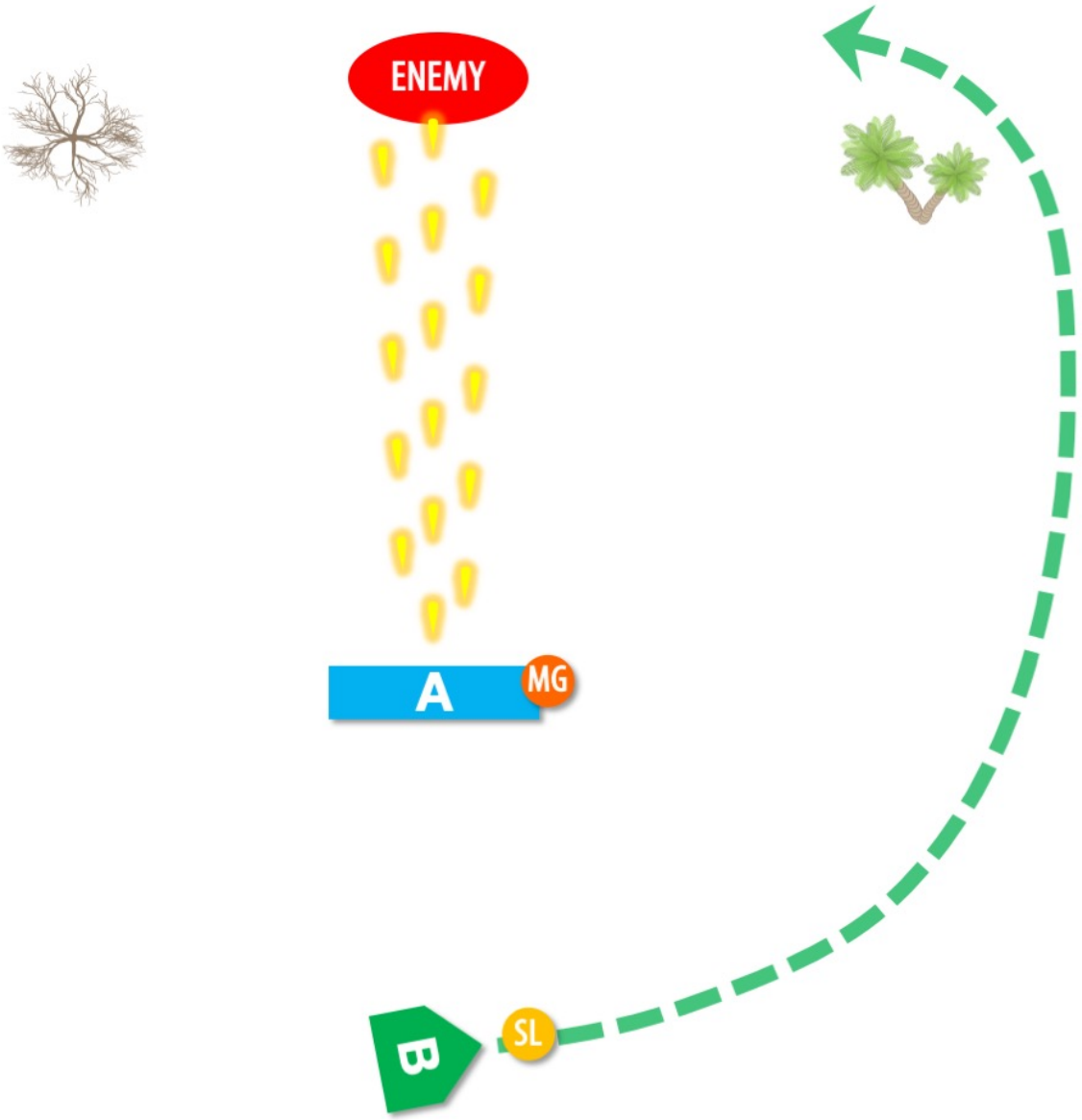
Next, it is useful to designate target reference points for the suppression/support element, particularly for the machine gun. At a minimum, the squad leader should pick an easily identifiable point to help the suppression element shift fire once the assault element begins to cross the objective. If the suppression element is firing heavy weapons at the enemy, when it comes time for the assault element to assault through the enemy position, the assault element might get hit by bullets fired by the support element. It is therefore critical for the support element to shift fire in a safe direction or to cease fire all together to avoid shooting friendly troops. Before leaving the support element, the squad leader will identify a point on the ground past which the support element should shift fire once the assault element is in position to assault.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 5: Squad Leader Guides Rear Team in Bold Flank

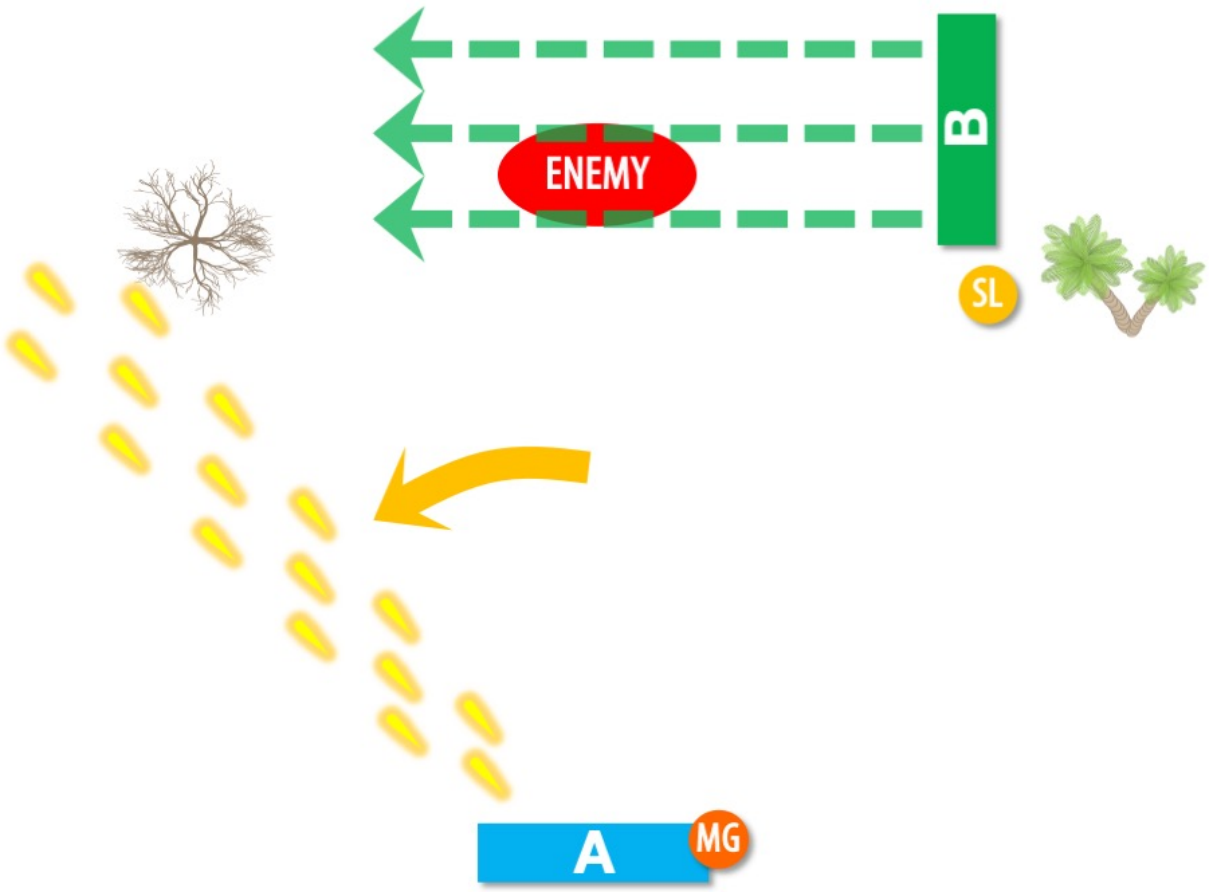
The squad leader will then move back to the rear team and lead the team around to flank the enemy, watching out for the movement reference points he/she previously identified. The conventional wisdom is generally to execute a “bold flank” meaning to move around in a wide arc. If the flanking movement is not bold enough, the enemy will be able to see the flanking element coming.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 6: Flanking Element Assaults Through Objective

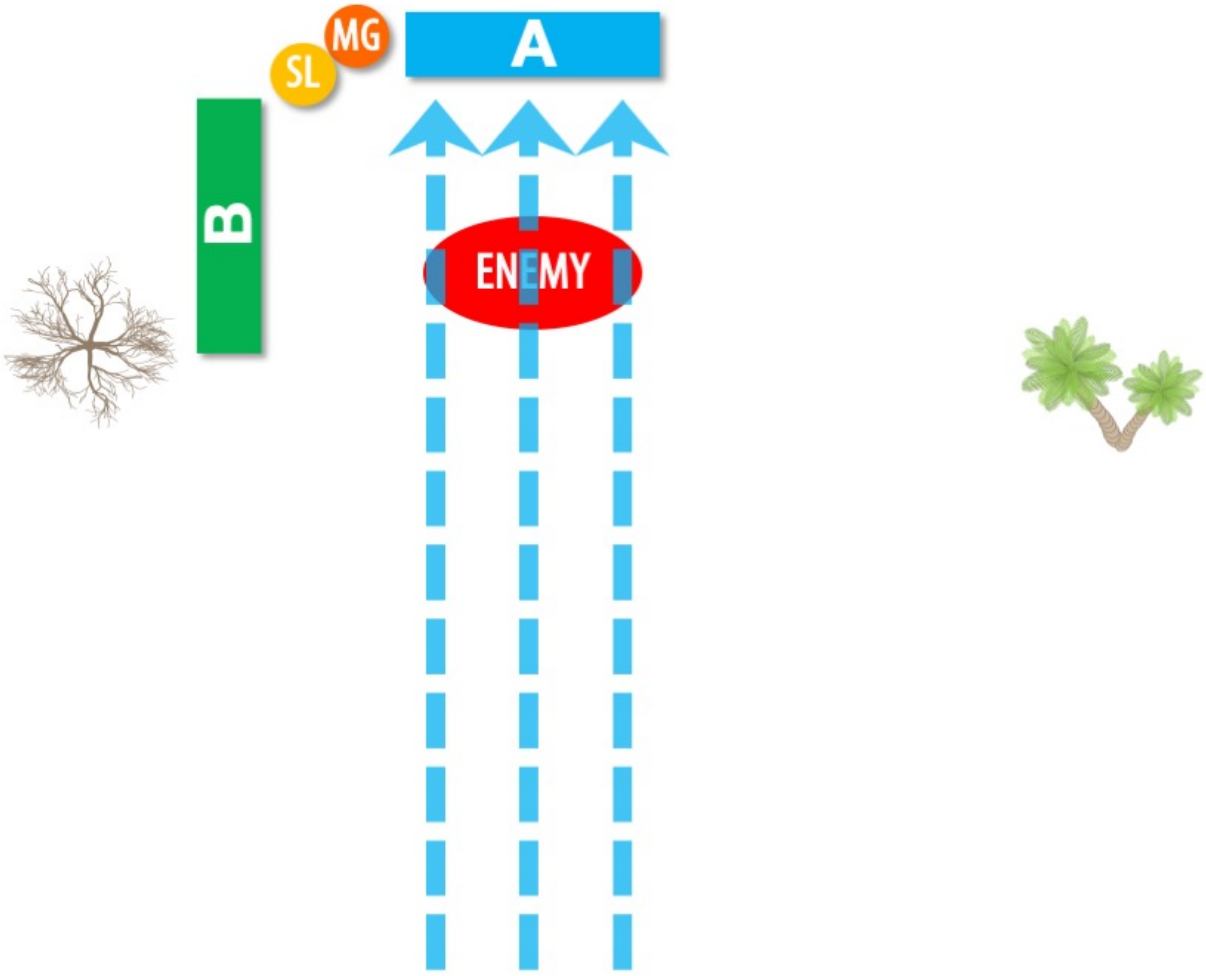
Upon reaching the assault position, the squad leader will give the shift fire signal to the support element to ensure the flanking element does not run into friendly bullets. The squad leader will then hand control over to the flanking team leader and allow the team leader to aggressively assault forward and engage the enemy in close combat. The team leader will generally use buddy rushes or bounding techniques when assaulting through. The squad leader will remain in a position to best coordinate the movement of the assault team with the incoming fire from the support element.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: SUPRESS AND FLANK

STEP 7: Assault Element Reaches Limit of Advance

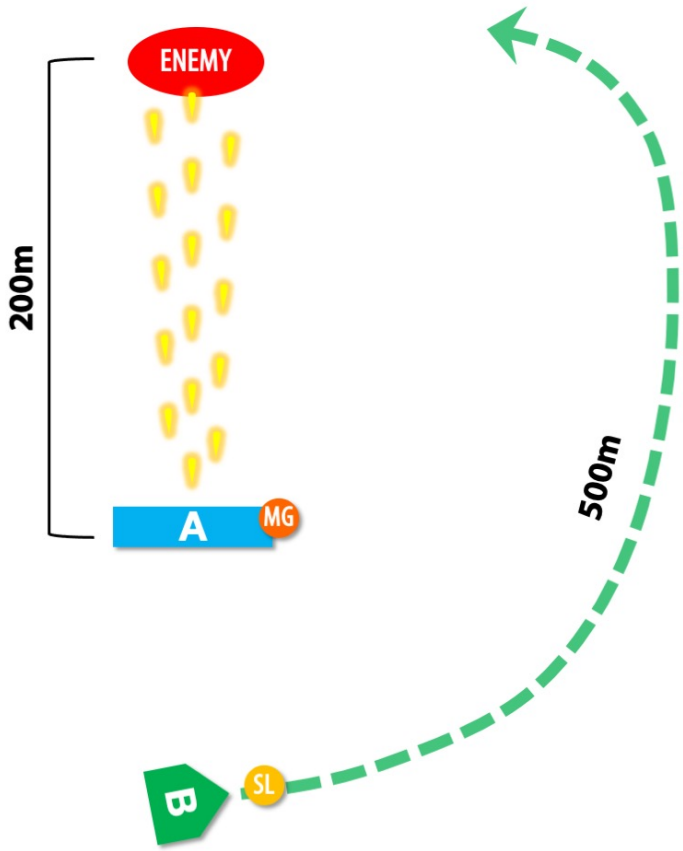
Once the assault element has eliminated all threats and reached the end of the enemy positions, the assault team leader or squad leader will call out "LOA" or (limit of advance) to get the assaulting element to stop and hold in place, remaining in a line formation. The support element will then pick up and move forward, also assaulting across the objective and forming a line perpendicular to the assault line. At this point the squad will perform "actions on the objective" which can include a number of different activities including checking the dead and caring for casualties.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: COMMON PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 1: Engagement Distance and Ammo Load

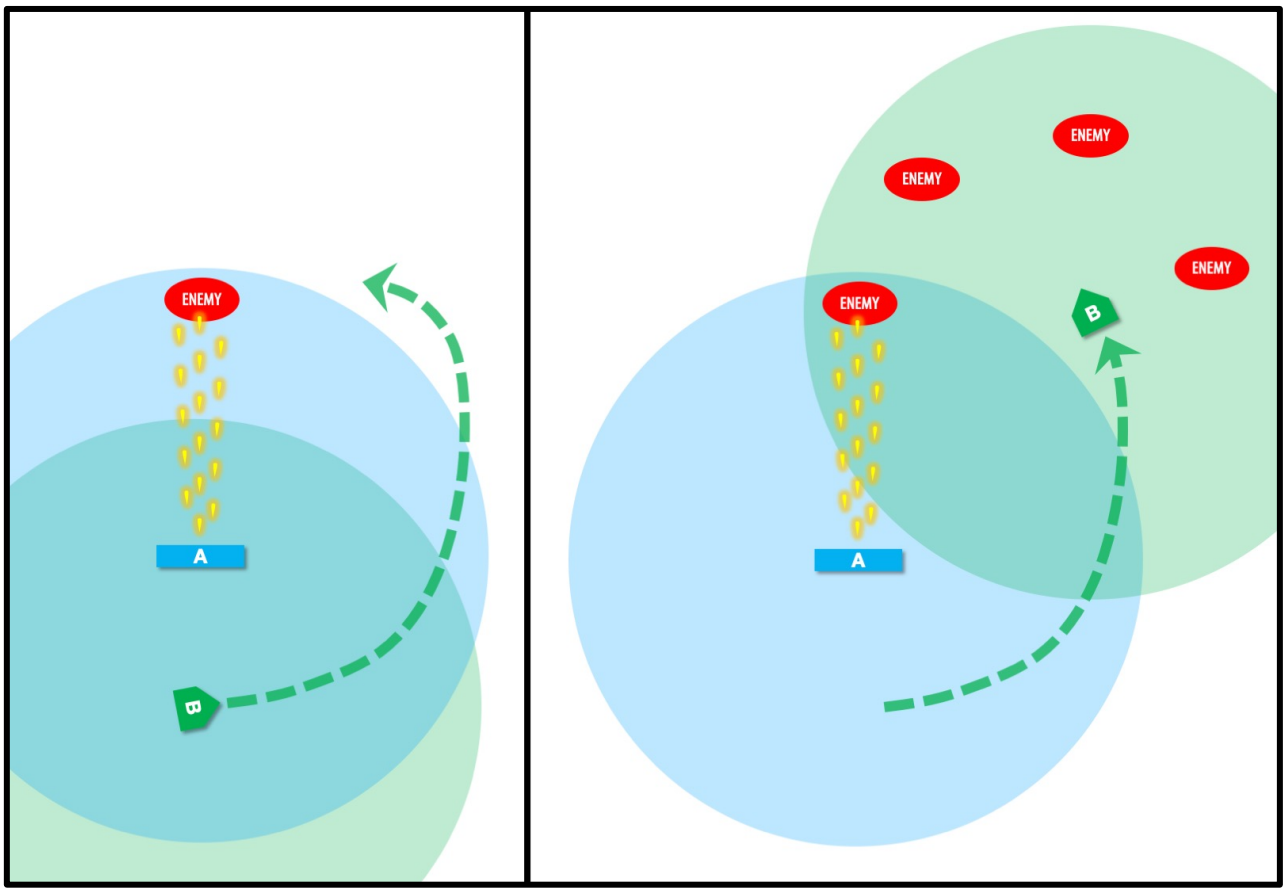
The previous sections offered a general explanation of the standard, doctrinal suppress and flank battle drill. While as we have already mentioned, this drill is intended only as a guideline or starting point for tactical maneuver, there are a number of problems with using the unmodified battle drill exactly as prescribed in the book. The first has to do with the length of the flank. A typical engagement range in conventional warfare could be as far as 200m or 300m. This means if the flanking element makes even a moderately bold flank (as shown in the picture, the total movement distance for the flanking element will likely be farther than 500m. Moving 500m over rough terrain in full gear, especially at night can take time. Then consider that if the machine guns in the support position are firing at a sustained rate of fire, based on standard U.S. Army basic ammo loadouts, the light machine guns will have probably expended their ammunition and the medium machine guns will be at least half-empty by the time the assault element is in position to assault. These figures cannot be exact since many variables come into play, however, with the weapons and ammo available to the squad, a long, bold flank will likely present problems.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: COMMON PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 2: Exposure to New Threats and Isolation

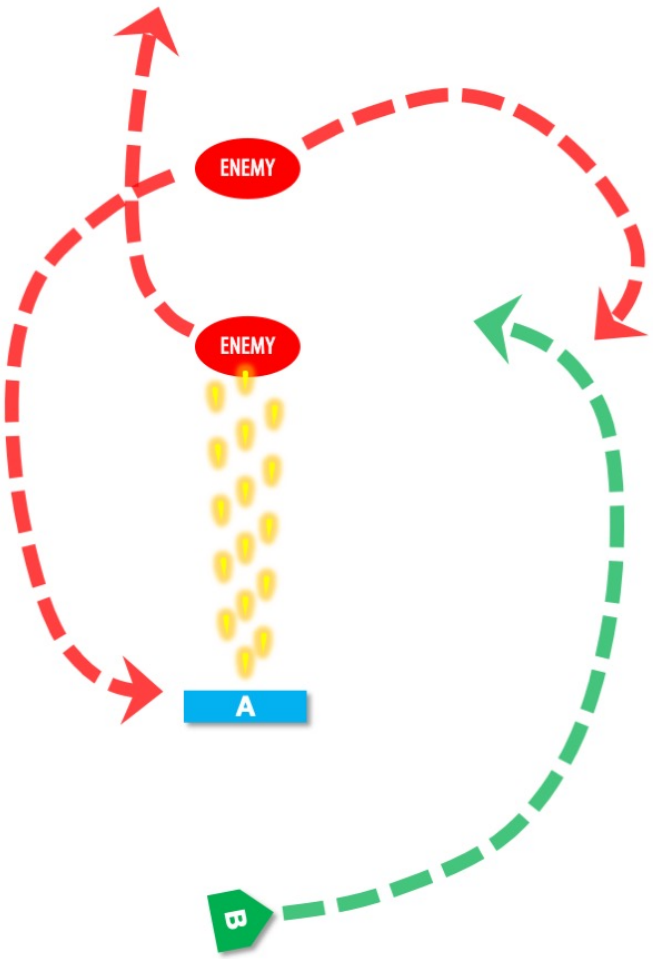
Given the engagement distances just discussed, by the time the flanking element is approaching the assault position, it will be able to see a lot farther and a lot more than the area originally visible to the support element. In the example below with shaded observation areas, the lead team understandably makes contact near the limit of its observation range and will see only one enemy element. As the trail team flanks around and moves ahead, it may see and be exposed to additional enemy elements that are not visible to the support element. The support element therefore cannot provide covering fire to help protect the flanking element. Furthermore, given that the flanking element is attempting a bold flank, the flanking element might be so far away that it is not even be visible to the support element when these new enemy forces appear. This could leave the flanking element completely isolated and facing potentially superior forces. At this point the two elements are no longer mutually supporting and therefore cannot effectively break contact.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: COMMON PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 3: Unpredictable Enemy Reaction

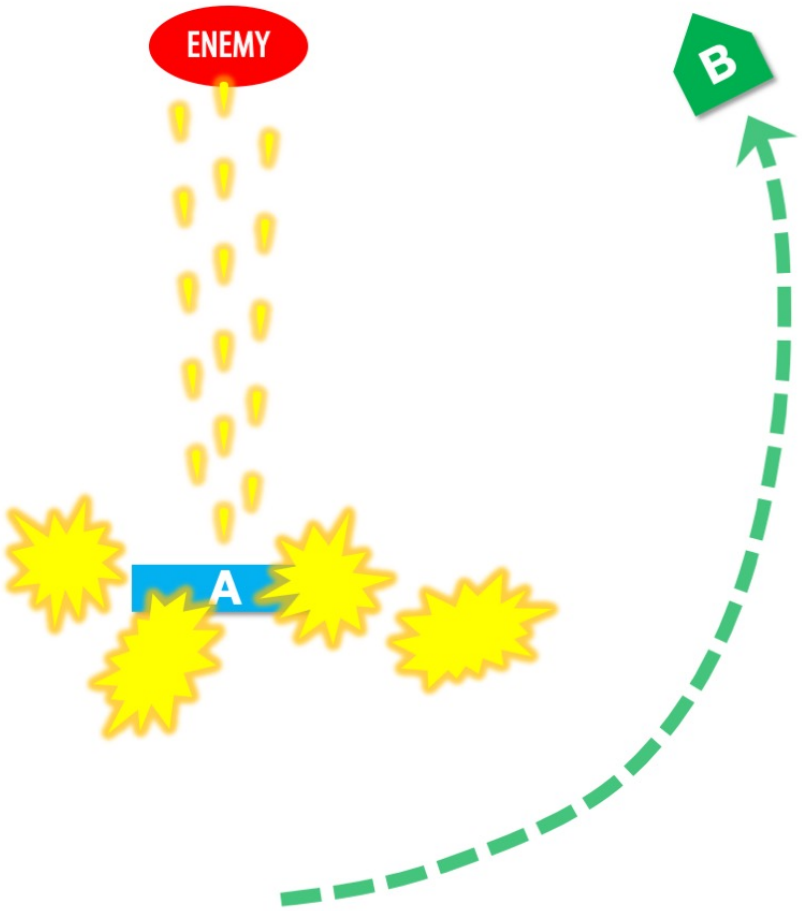
The basic battle drill formula also assumes that the enemy either chooses to do nothing or is unable to do anything because they are completely suppressed by supporting fires. While either of these results is possible, it would be foolish to assume that the enemy will do nothing in every case. Combined with the possibility mentioned earlier of additional enemy units further away that you didn't initially spot, there are quite a few possibilities for enemy counteraction. The enemy might attempt to flank you from the same side or the opposite side of your flanking element. The enemy might attempt to attack and destroy your support element or anticipate your flank and wait in ambush for your assault element. Even more likely, the enemy will simply try to pull back and break contact. Any of these actions changes the scenario and makes the basic battle drill formula break down in some way.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: COMMON PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 4: Enemy Indirect Fire

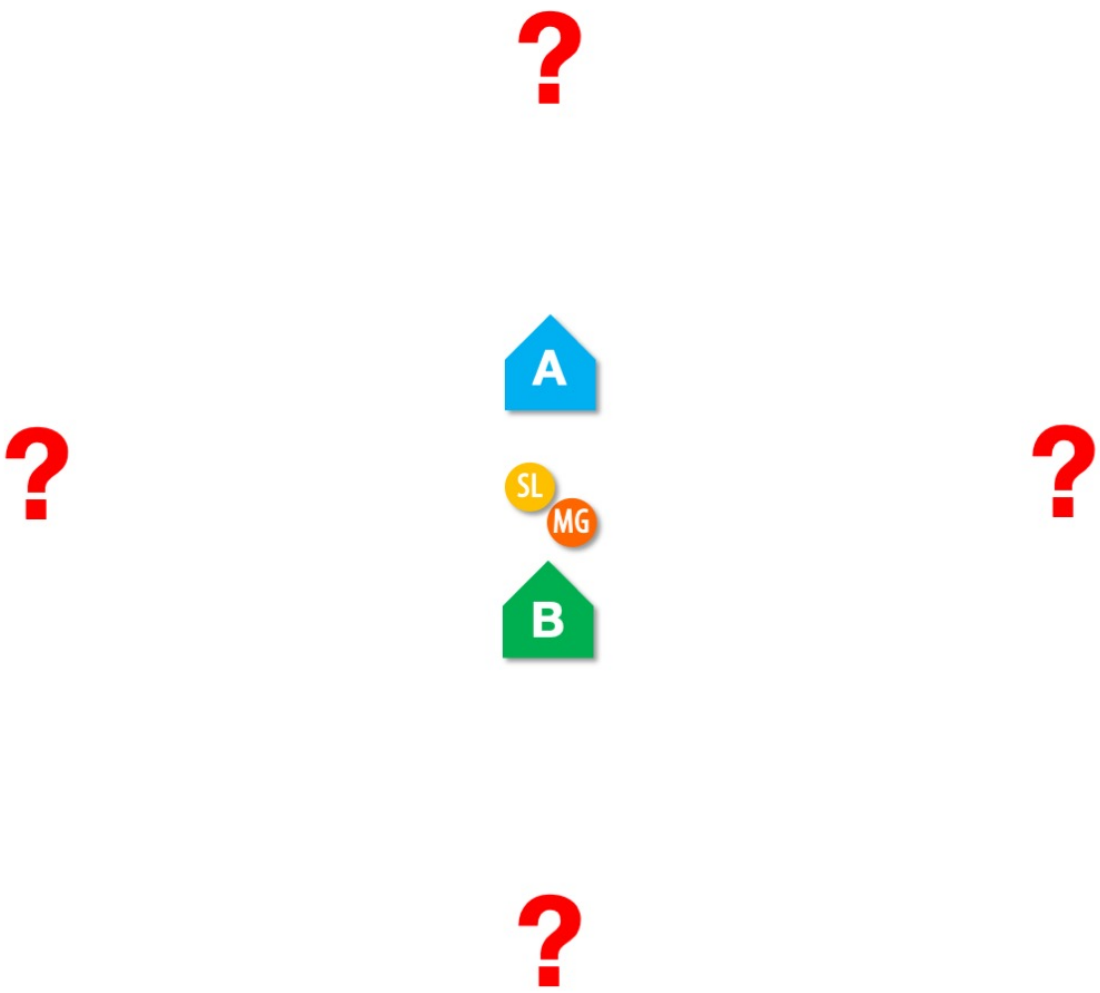
As already discussed, depending on the engagement range it can take the assault element a while to bound around into the assault position. If the enemy has indirect fire assets like mortars or artillery, he will likely call in a fire mission as soon as the engagement starts. You should study patterns for enemy artillery employment and response time in your area of operations to know the approximate time window you have before rounds start falling on your position. If the enemy response time is fast, it might not be safe or wise to leave a supporting element in place for a long period of time.



TRADITIONAL BATTLE DRILLS: COMMON PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 5: Attacks from Other Directions

Battle drills as explained in doctrinal manuals can be applied to enemy contact in any direction. However, because the specific examples, drawings and steps in the manuals often focus on contact to the front, military units frequently end up practicing only attacks to the front and fail to practice executing the battle drill in different directions. While the fundamental steps and movements of the drill remain generally the same, there are some important changes in how you execute the drill based on the direction from which the attack is coming. Taking a more flexible approach to fire and maneuver from the outset sets you up for success when encountering enemies from different directions.



BATTLECRAFT
Immediate Action

As already discussed, the logic behind battle drills is sound but the practice and application of battle drills often becomes more rigid and inflexible than was originally intended by the doctrine writers. This book advocates a slightly different approach to infantry combat that we believe is more flexible, easier to understand and more focused on real-world application than it is on process. We refer to this new approach as battlecraft. At the foundation of battlecraft is the concept of an "Immediate Action Response" (sometimes referred to as an Immediate Action Drill) is similar to a battle drill but differs in some key ways.

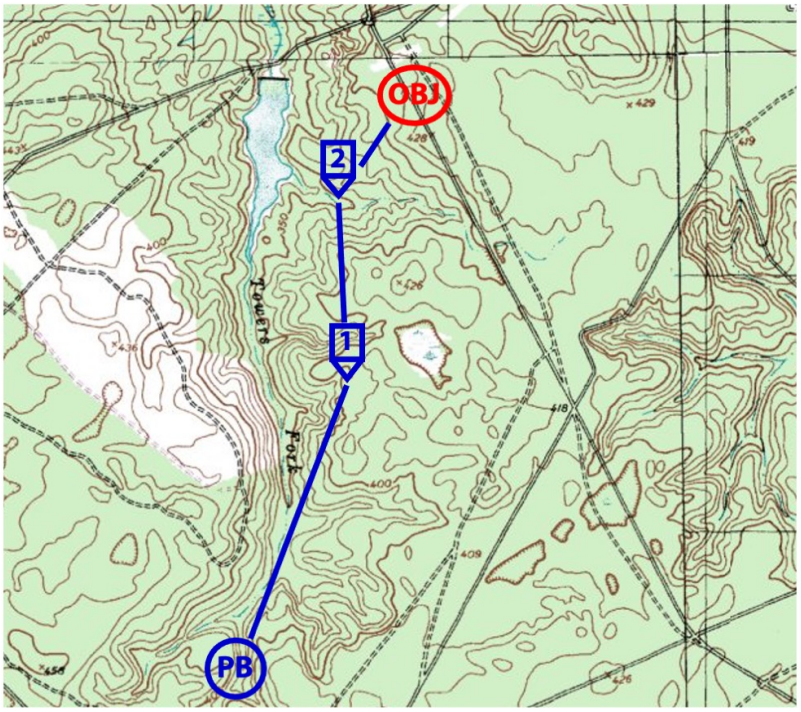
In their application, battle drills can end up being too "big." Most battle drills offer steps or prescribed actions that go from initial contact to consolidation and reorganization on the objective. In short, the battle drill tells you exactly what to do from the moment the shooting starts until the enemy is destroyed. An immediate action drill only offers steps to respond to the initial contact with the enemy and the drill ends there. This allows for a quick, reflexive response to enemy fire but does not lock the squad into any specific course of action after that.

While the most common term is immediate action "drill," we prefer to call it immediate action "response." The reason for this is even though immediate actions have to be instinctive and reflexive, there is still some flexibility required. Essentially, you cannot simply perform the drill the same way every time. The terrain and situation will always be unpredictable and if you train for immediate action like a drill that never changes, you may not make the right choices in the heat of a stressful moment.

The following section explains how to train for and execute an effective immediate action response. To be truly effective, you must not apply the immediate action response in isolation, but rather it should build off of everything you have already learned. If you are moving over the most advantageous terrain, employing the optimal movement formations and techniques, you will already be halfway to executing a good immediate action response.

Navigation Roles and Route Selection

The first step to executing an effective immediate action response is ensuring that you are moving along a route that puts you in the most advantageous position should you make contact with the enemy at any given point along the route. If you employ the concepts already discussed in the section on navigation and route planning you will likely be on the way to achieving this. The map below (taken from the section on navigation and route selection) gives an example of a route with checkpoints and legs that attempts to take advantage of the terrain based on the mission. As already mentioned, the map is not to scale and is intended only as an example for explanatory purposes.



PATROL BASE
GRID: 2135 4525

DISTANCE: 3150 m
AZIMUTH: 021°
LEFT HANDRAIL: Lowground

CP 1
GRID: 2196 4877

DISTANCE: 1240 m
AZIMUTH: 356°
LEFT HANDRAIL: Lowground

CP 2
GRID: 2183 5024
BACKSTOP: Spur

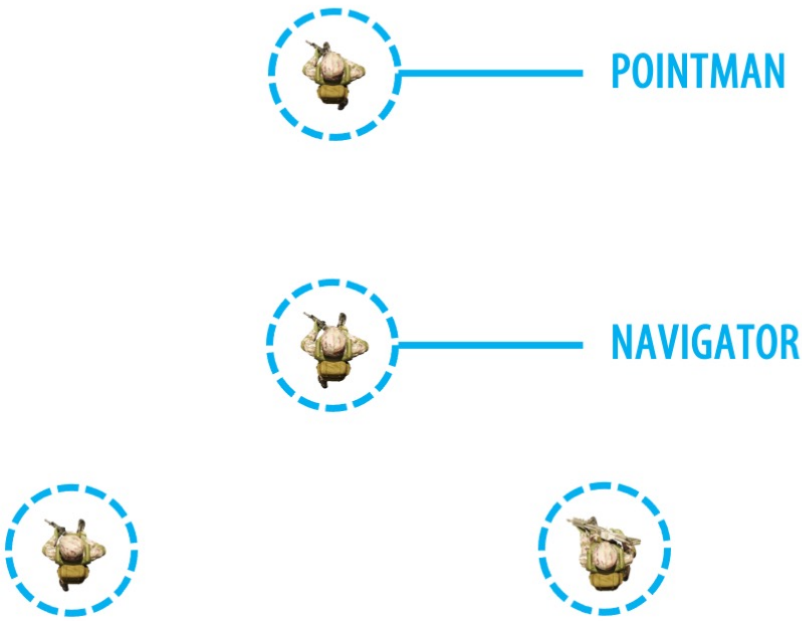
DISTANCE: 680 m
AZIMUTH: 035°

OBJ
GRID: 2249 5099

For the reasons already explained in the previous section, the route does not follow an exact straight line but rather consists of checkpoints with specific distances and azimuths from one checkpoint to the next. In the example above, the squad will change direction three times while moving to the objective which offers advantages over moving along a single straight line. However, it would be even safer and more effective if the squad was able to change direction as needed and adjust its path according to the terrain between each checkpoint as well. Therefore, the squad would be constantly changing direction to take advantage of the terrain, rather than just changing direction three times.

Accomplishing this begins with assigning specific roles for different squad members when it comes to navigation. It can also be helpful to use the arrowhead (modified diamond) formation for several reasons. As already explained, if the pointman is also responsible for

navigation and checking the map, it is likely the pointman will become overly burdened. Walking point is a difficult job and it is best for the pointman to be able to focus full attention on the enemy and the surrounding terrain, without having to look down at a map and compass. The lead team leader is a good choice to assign as the lead navigator for the squad. This allows the squad leader to focus on the bigger, tactical picture and communicate with higher headquarters.

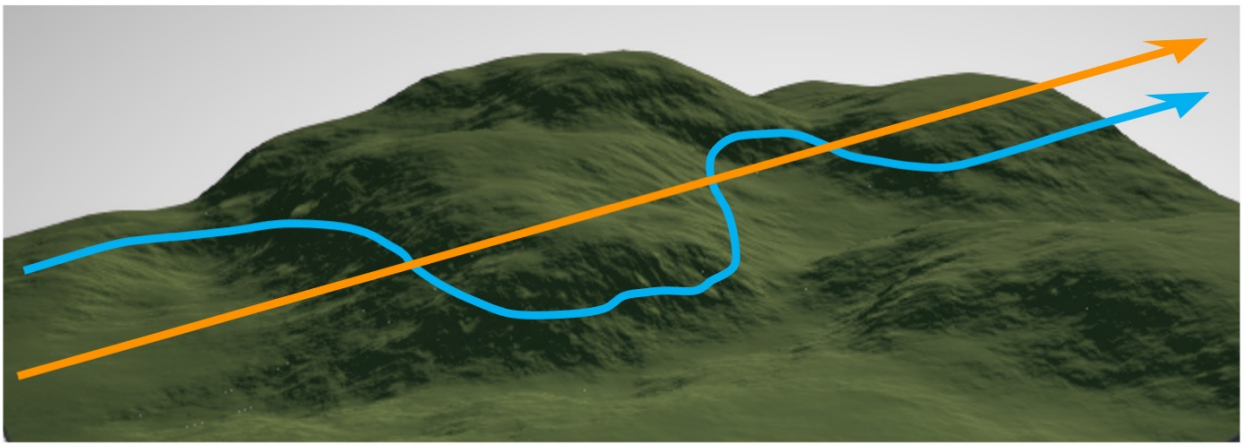


Therefore, as in the picture above, the pointman focuses outward on the enemy to allow the lead team leader to keep track of the squad's position on the map, along with the azimuth and distance to the next checkpoint. However, if the team leader is not actually in the lead of the formation, leading the squad, how can he/she ensure that the squad is going in the right direction?

The answer is that the navigator only provides general adjustments to the squad's course and it is the pointman who actually determines the squads path along the terrain. Periodically, the pointman will look back and the navigator will give a hand signal (generally pointing with a knife hand) to indicate the direction to the next checkpoint. The navigator will emphasize if the squad is drifting to the right or left as needed. Essentially, the navigator becomes the pointman's compass. However, the pointman will not follow the compass azimuth directly since traveling in a straight line will most likely not take full advantage of the terrain or put the squad in the best possible position to respond to chance contact with the enemy.

In summary, the navigator determines the general route and ensures the squad arrives at the desired location. The pointman determines the specific route based on the terrain and most likely enemy positions. By allowing the pointman to move on the most advantageous terrain, you are prepping the ground to make your immediate action response as effective as possible

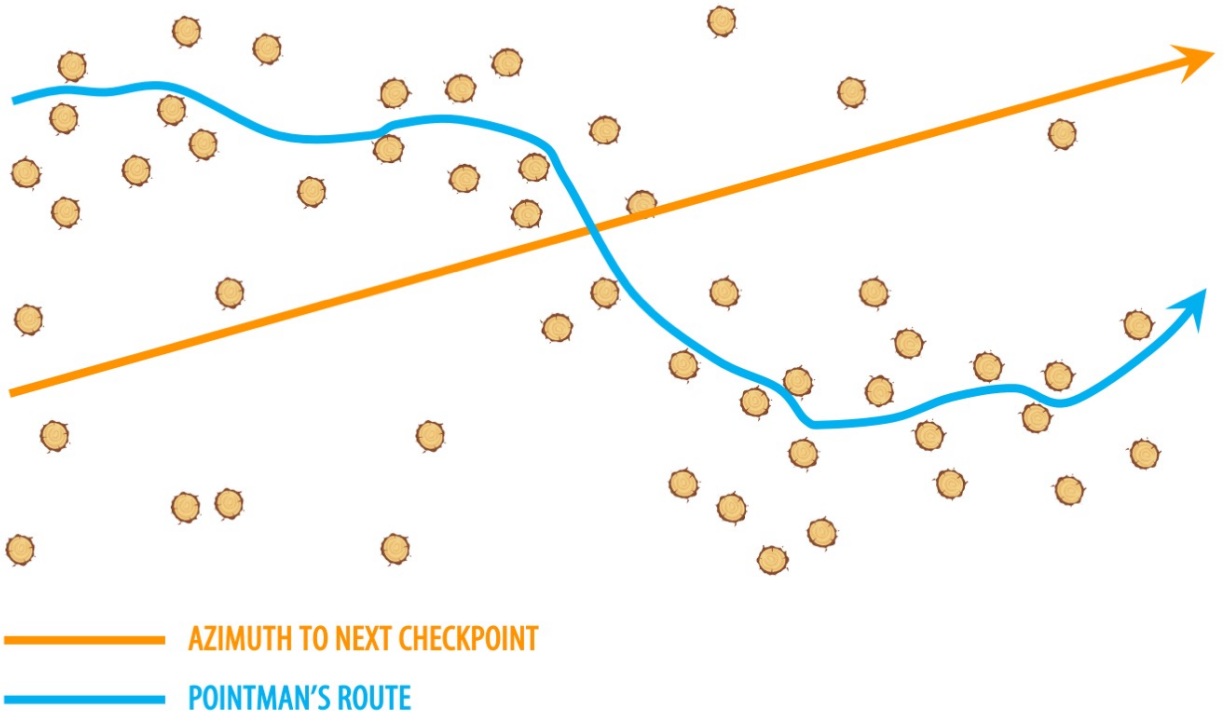
should you make contact with the enemy at any point along your route. The image below shows an example of how the straight-line azimuth between two checkpoints can differ from the actual path the pointman chooses to follow based on the terrain. In the example below, the pointman avoids exposing the squad to enemy observation by walking over the crests of hills and takes advantage of the military crest, ensuring the squad has the best possible observation of the surrounding terrain. It is true that in the example below, the blue route is longer than the orange route and might take longer to travel. There may be cases when the squad has to move in a straight line because of time constraints or other factors. However, in most cases it is best to take maximum advantage of the terrain while moving.



In the example above, the pointman chose a route that takes advantage of the terrain in terms of high-ground vs. low ground, the military crest and the protection offered by terrain features. There are other factors that the pointman must consider when choosing where to lead the squad. As discussed earlier, each trooper in the squad should focus his/her attention outward and anticipate where the enemy might be hiding, then adjust his/her movement accordingly to take advantage of cover and concealment. The pointman must do the same thing except the pointman must do so for the entire squad, not just for himself/herself.

For example, the pointman might determine that the most likely direction of an enemy attack is from the right side and then identify a piece of cover to his/her front that provides good protection from such an attack. If the pointman immediately moves towards that piece of cover without considering the rest of the squad, he/she is making a mistake. The pointman should look for terrain where the entire squad can effectively take cover in the event of enemy contact. This could mean looking for a rise or dip in the terrain where the entire squad could fit, or a long rock formation providing multiple firing positions. In many cases, terrain with good cover and concealment for the entire squad is terrain with plenty of thick trees capable of stopping bullets.

The image below shows how a pointman might select a route that brings the squad through areas where there are plenty of trees to provide cover. There are some trees along the straight-line distance marked with the orange line, but there may not be enough trees for every member of the squad to find an effective piece of cover quickly. However, the route marked in blue brings the squad through areas with more trees and therefore more available cover and concealment.



The image above is intended to serve only as an example and as already explained, cover and concealment does not always come in the form of trees but may also include slopes in the terrain, rocks, fallen logs etc. The pointman must remain aware of all available cover and concealment when choosing the best route for the squad. The pointman must also consider which route gives each squad member the best observation and fields of fire.

With the navigator (lead team leader) choosing and plotting the best route on the map, the pointman picking the best route through the terrain based on the situation, and each individual squad member picking the best individual movement path based on his/her immediate surroundings, the squad is in the best possible position to execute an effective immediate action response should it make contact with the enemy at any moment along the route.

Immediate Action Response Principles

Navigation and route selection by the navigator (lead team leader) and pointman will put the squad in the best possible position to execute an effective immediate action response should it make contact with the enemy at any point. However, navigation and route selection are only half of the equation. The second half of the equation is to execute a smooth movement to get the entire team or squad on-line facing the enemy, behind cover and returning effective fire as quickly as possible.

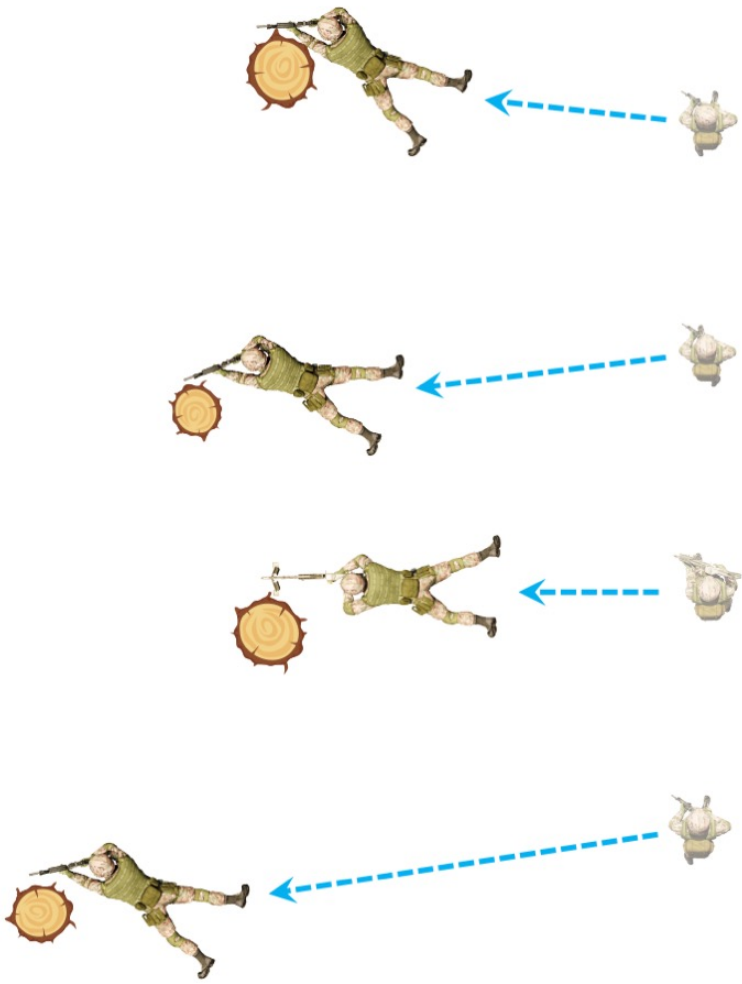
The following pages give some general ideas and principles for how to accomplish these things. However, there are rarely fixed formulas for tactical movements that work every time. Some doctrinal manuals or schoolhouses offer complex instructions, dictating how each member of the squad or team should move to get into a firing line in a specific order or sequence. These instructions sometimes change based on the direction of enemy attack and the formation that the team/squad is using. In high-stress situations, following complex movement patterns is usually difficult. In addition, since it is critical for troopers to find the best possible cover, the reality of the terrain might not match the dictated movements of a rigid, doctrinal system.

Therefore, the only way to get better at effectively executing an immediate action response is to practice over and over, reacting to enemy contact from different directions while moving across different types of terrain. While the following pages offer some options for how to come on-line facing different directions, the best option is generally to simply "collapse" the formation in the direction of contact. Each trooper might not find an ideal, covered firing position immediately so if necessary, the squad members can adjust position or move to the left or right as needed. In addition, the team leader or squad leader might want to be close to the heavy weapons to better direct their fire. Leaders may have to adjust position in the formation to be closer to the heavy weapons.

IMMEDIATE ACTION: FACING MOVEMENT

Each Trooper Pivots Towards Contact

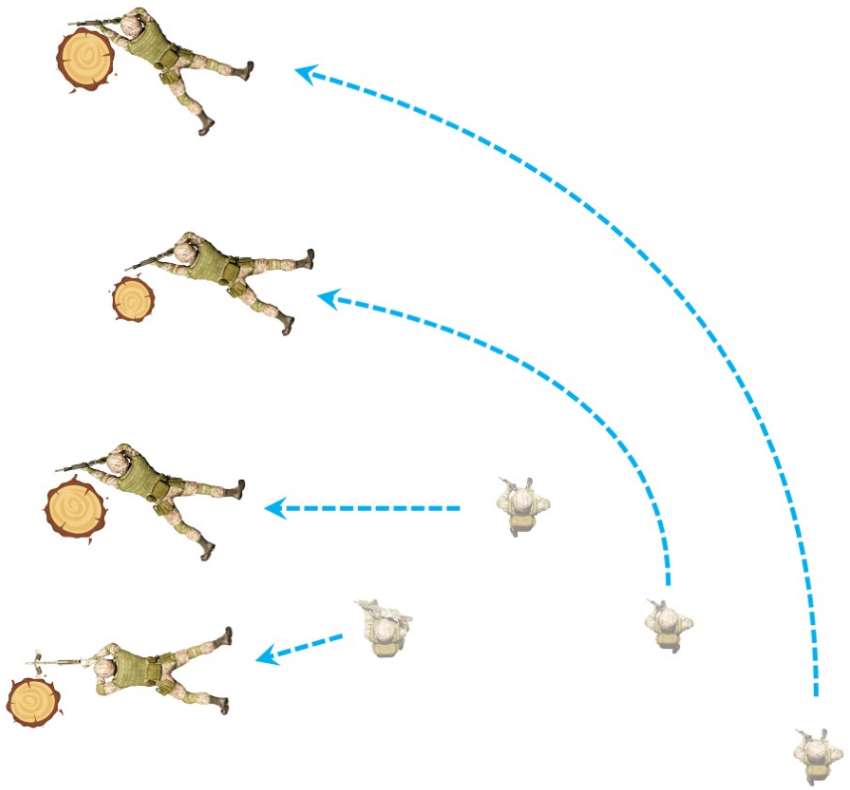
One of the easiest immediate action movements simply involves changing the orientation of the formation. In the example below, the team is already in a single-file formation. If the team takes contact to the right or left side, all the troopers have to do is turn to the left or right simultaneously and seek cover. This works best with formations that are more linear. When moving in a wedge formation, a team can easily come on-line when making contact to the front or rear. Essentially, you can execute a facing movement when you are in a linear formation that is already on-line with the enemy contact.



IMMEDIATE ACTION: WHEEL MOVEMENT

Formation Wheels Towards Contact

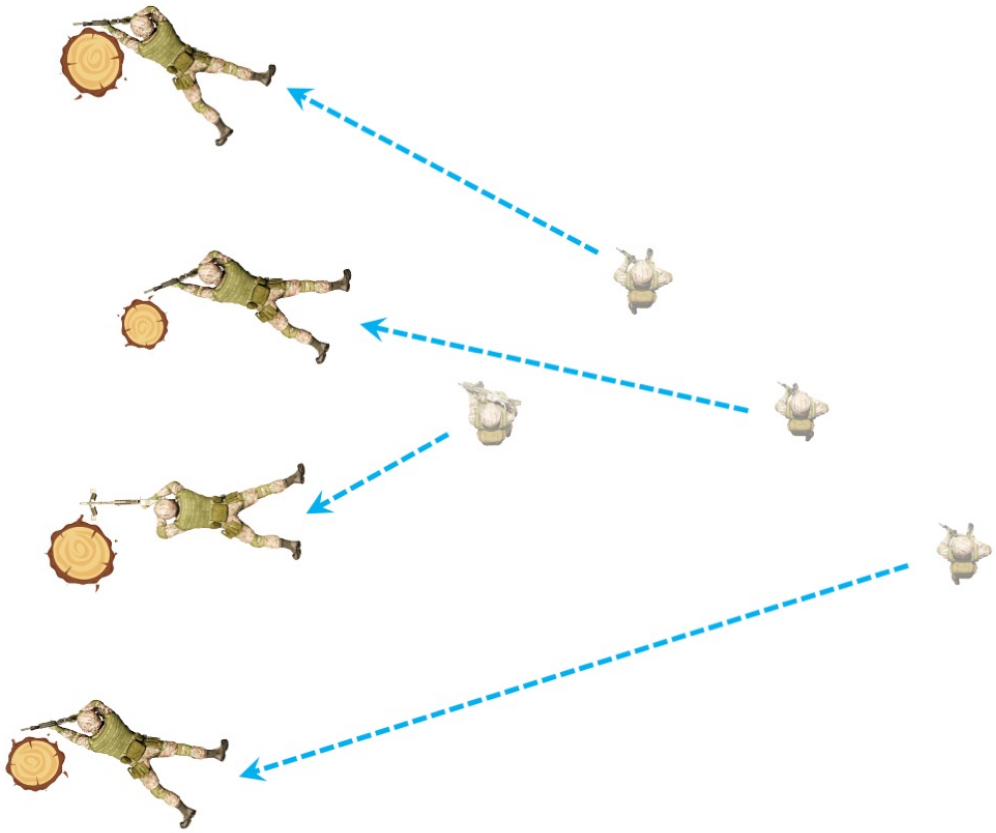
In some cases, you might be moving in a more linear formation and make contact in a direction that is not on-line with how your weapons are currently oriented. In the example below, if the team wedge made contact to the front, minimal adjustment of the formation would be needed. However, when the wedge makes contact to the left, the troopers need to adjust position to get online so they all have fields of fire. One way to do this is simply to rotate (or wheel) the whole formation in the direction of contact. This keeps the same orientation of troops to each other. For example, if the team leader is in the center of the formation and the machine gun is on the left, those troops will be in the same position as the team comes online. However, one of the major problems with the wheel movement, as show in the image below, is that the trooper on the outside of the wheel sometimes has to move very far to get on-line. This problem gets worse the greater the initial spacing of troops in the formation. Therefore, in many cases the wheel movement is not the ideal choice when executing an immediate action response. While the example below depicts executing a wheel from a wedge formation, the wheel movement can apply to any formation.



IMMEDIATE ACTION: COLLAPSE MOVEMENT

Each Trooper Moves to Nearest Cover

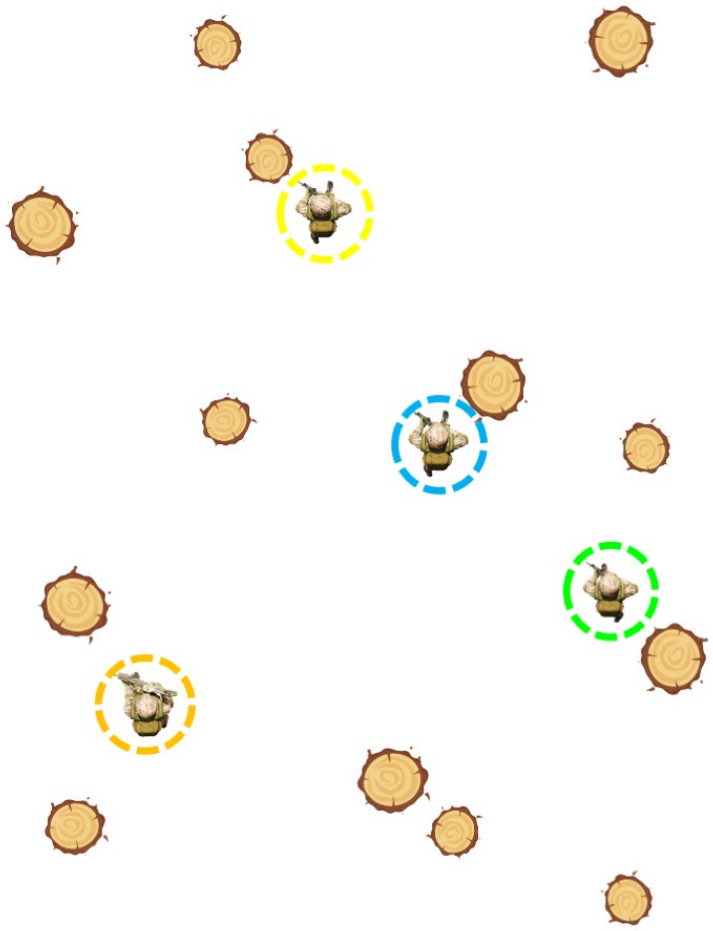
The collapse movement is generally the quickest and most effective option when you make contact in a direction that is not on-line with the orientation of your formation. In the example below, each trooper moves directly to the nearest piece of cover while maintain spacing with the rest of the team. This means that troopers will not necessarily maintain their orientation to each other. For example, in the picture below, if the team leader starts out in the center and the machine gun starts out on the left side, after collapsing on line the team leader is on the far right side and the machine gunner is in the center. In some cases this might not be a problem but in other cases the leader might want to reposition to better control specific weapon systems. For a highly experienced team, this is sometimes less necessary. While the example below depicts executing a collapse movement from a wedge formation, the collapse movement can apply to any formation.



IMMEDIATE ACTION: COMBAT APPLICATION

Taking Advantage of the Terrain

In the examples on the previous pages of facing movements, wheel movements and collapse movements, for the sake of demonstration and clarity, the troopers in the images start off in a perfectly shaped formation and have to move some distance to their covered firing positions. In reality, if you are following the guidance on tactical movement from earlier in this book, troopers should already be next to cover or at least close to cover when they make contact. The example below shows a team moving in an arrowhead (modified diamond) formation but adjusting the formation to stay close to nearby cover. Looking at the example below and imagining how the team would react to contact from the front, left, right or rear, it is easy to see how no single formula (facing movement, wheel or collapse) can dictate how a unit will react every time. Once again a unit must practice repeatedly and be prepared to adjust position if needed.

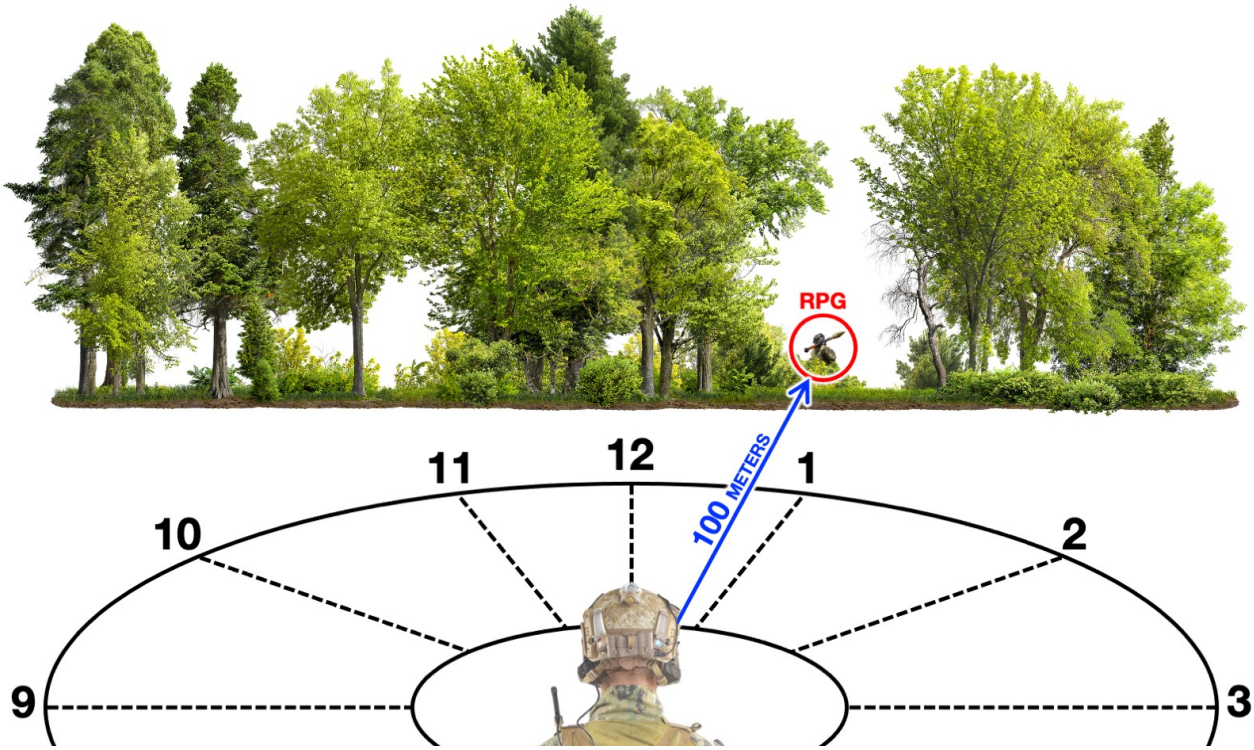


IMMEDIATE ACTION: ALERTS AND FIRE COMMANDS

Direction, Distance and Description

At the same time that the team or squad is executing its immediate action response, it must also be communicating to pinpoint the enemy's location. This involves calling out the enemy's direction, distance and description (abbreviated as the 3D's). Anyone in the squad can call out the 3D's since any member of the squad might have the best observation of the enemy. Once one trooper calls out the 3D's the others should echo the information throughout the squad so everyone knows where the enemy is. When you first make contact, you might not have all the information. You might initially only have a general direction. Call out the information you know as you try to learn more specifics. In addition to the 3D's, if you are talking to a specific weapon system like a machine gun or grenade launcher you can give other instructions or fire commands such as the rate of fire or type of ammunition to use. It is important to call out direction, distance and description in that order since it makes it easier to find the target. First the shooter scans left/right to the direction, then searches along that line to the correct distance, then looks for the specific target at that location. The image below gives an example of how to call out the 3D's.

"CONTACT ONE O'CLOCK, 100 METERS, RPG"



BATTLECRAFT
Offensive Combat with Two Elements

Combat maneuvering generally requires at least two elements. This is because conventional wisdom dictates that no element should move under fire without another element providing support or suppressive fire to keep the enemy's heads down. In simple terms, if you attempt to rush towards an enemy position without supporting fire, the enemy will be able to engage and kill your troopers fairly easily. However, the idea of a support element is to lay down enough fire on the enemy position to kill or suppress the enemy force. Even if your fire does not kill all of the enemy troops, the enemy will have to take cover from your fire and will not be able to return accurate fire. This is the concept of suppression. The support element will suppress the enemy while the maneuver element moves to a position of advantage. There are several examples of how to apply this simple fire and maneuver concept on the following pages.

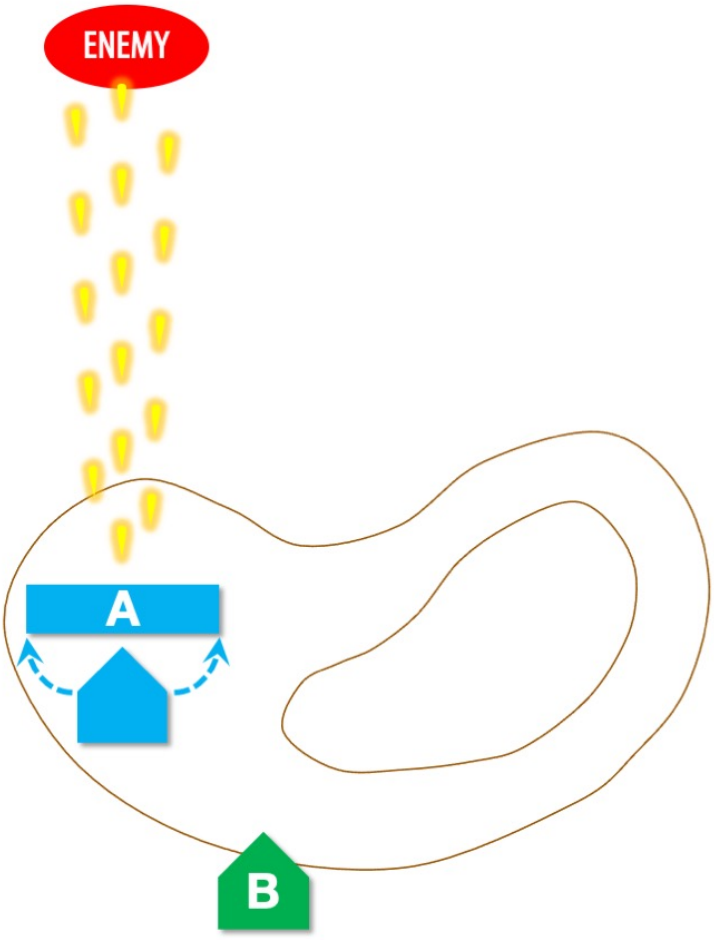
While most of the examples on the following pages depict a standard squad with two teams for demonstration purposes, the two "elements" in the tactical maneuvers described do not necessarily have to be teams. One element could be a team while the other might be a machine gun. In a three-team squad, one element might be comprised of two teams and the other element might be a single team and a machine gun. In short, two-element maneuver does not mean you necessarily have only two teams. It means there are two moving pieces in the maneuver itself.

The section that follows offers several examples of how to maneuver with two elements. These examples are not designed to be followed in a rigid manner, but they are rather intended to illuminate flexible, tactical concepts that can apply to many situations. We have tried to focus on the tactical concepts that are the most effective and most likely to prove useful in a real combat scenario. The section is labeled as "offensive combat" since in most cases, the types of maneuvers described are most applicable to the offense. However, at the squad level, the lines between offense and defense can blur and the maneuvers in the following pages could also potentially apply to defensive combat.

TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: ATTACK BY FIRE

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

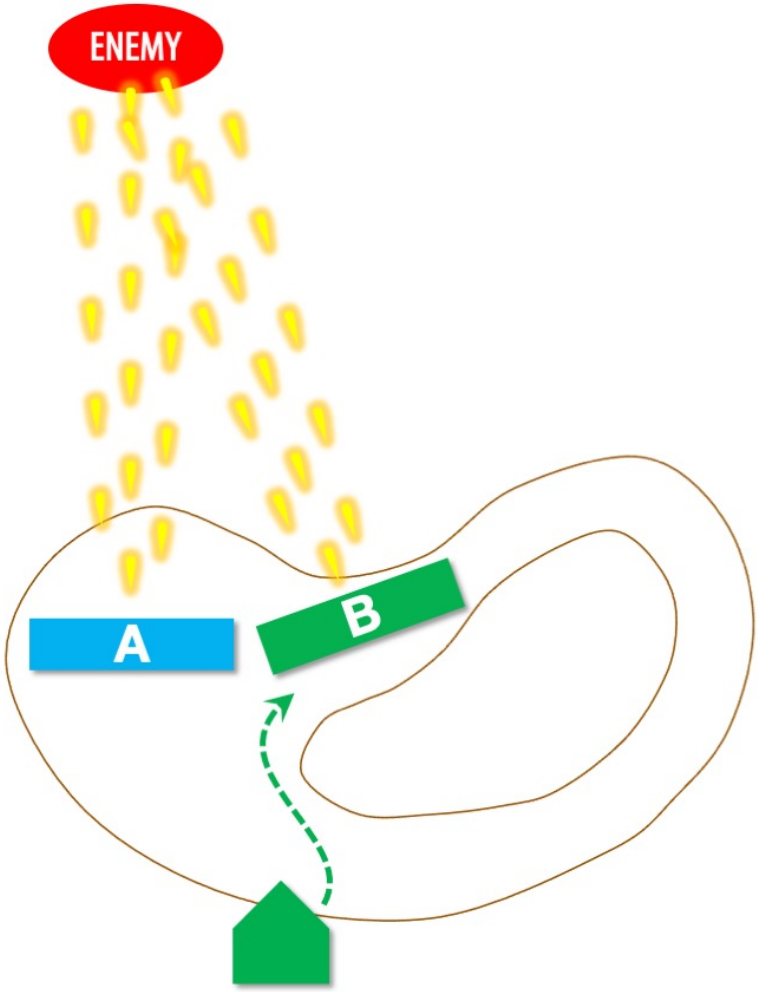
One of the problems with robotically executing the same suppress and flank battle drill every time you make contact, is that sometimes you may already be in a position of advantage and flanking around would not only increase your exposure but would decrease the effectiveness of your fires against the enemy. For example, you might catch the enemy exposed in the open while finding yourself on high-ground with plentiful cover and concealment. Especially if you are armed with superior weapons with better optics and greater engagement range, there is no reason to close with the enemy. If the enemy is less effective than you are in fighting at longer range, closing with the enemy actually negates your advantage and plays to the enemy's strengths. Therefore, in some cases the best course of action is not to maneuver at all but simply remain in place and destroy the enemy with accurate, effective fire.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: ATTACK BY FIRE

STEP 2: Trail Team Moves On-Line with Lead Team

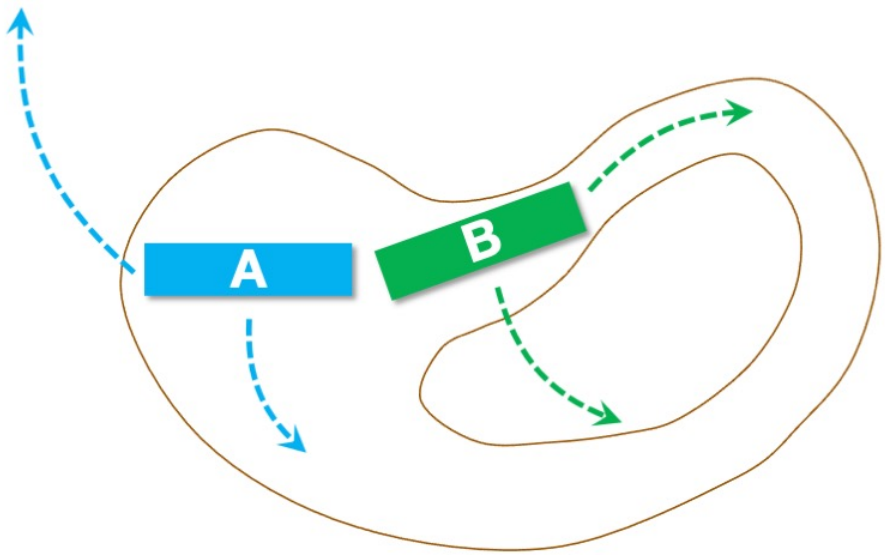
If you decide to attack by fire, you will want to get as many weapons into the fight as possible, especially any heavy weapons like machine guns. This will sometimes call for just moving the trail team up to the team already in contact and massing all available firepower on the enemy. In some cases, you might not find yourself exactly standing on the ideal terrain when combat begins. In these cases you may need to maneuver slightly or bound to the left or right to occupy the most advantageous terrain. Either way, the goal is to get as much firepower as possible engaging the enemy from the most advantageous terrain as quickly as possible.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: ATTACK BY FIRE

STEP 3: Maneuver or Reposition as Necessary

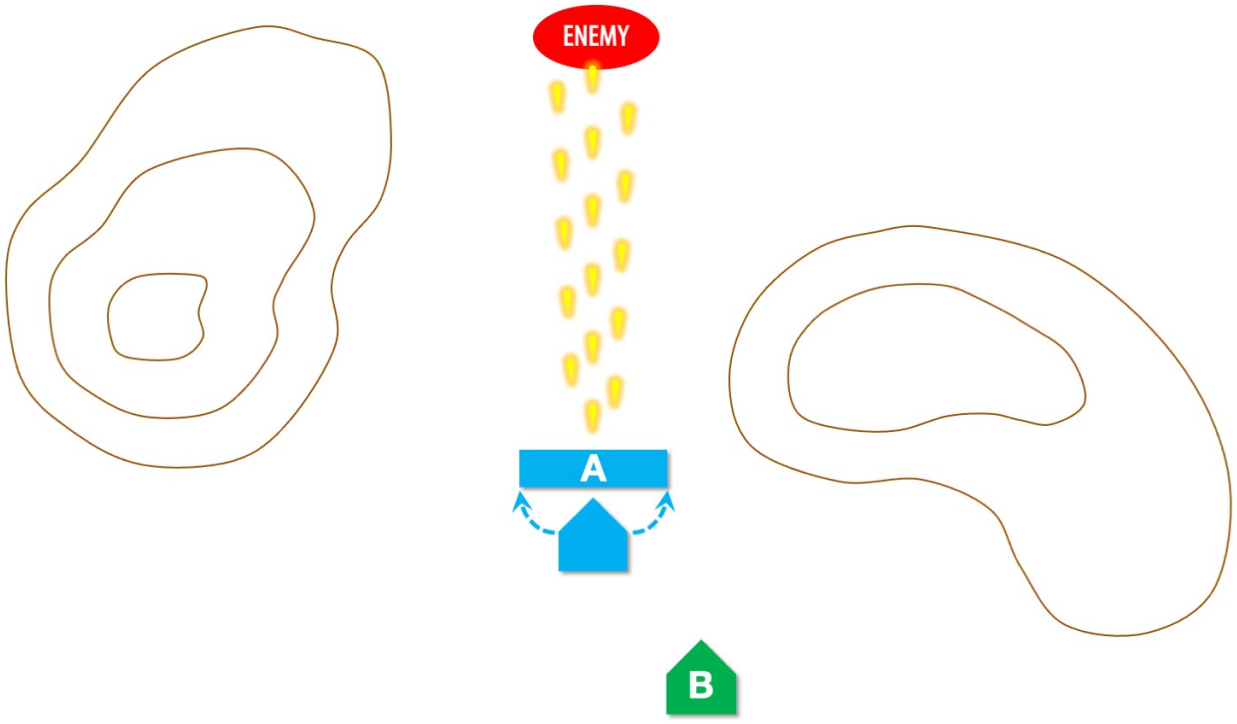
Once it appears that the enemy is destroyed you must not grow complacent and assume there is no possibility of additional threats. There may be more enemy forces coming from the same direction or the enemy could be flanking around to surprise you. Either way, you should assess the situation and decide on the best course of action. You might choose to remain in place quietly, watch and listen for enemies. Keep in mind however that if the enemy has artillery there might be artillery rounds falling on your position in the next few minutes. You might choose to adjust position slightly for better cover or observation. You may choose to fall back to a better defensive position or you may choose to start maneuvering towards the enemy to assess the damage you caused in your attack by fire. Whatever you choose to do, remain alert for additional enemies in the area and be prepared to continue to fight if needed.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUNDING TO TACTICAL L

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

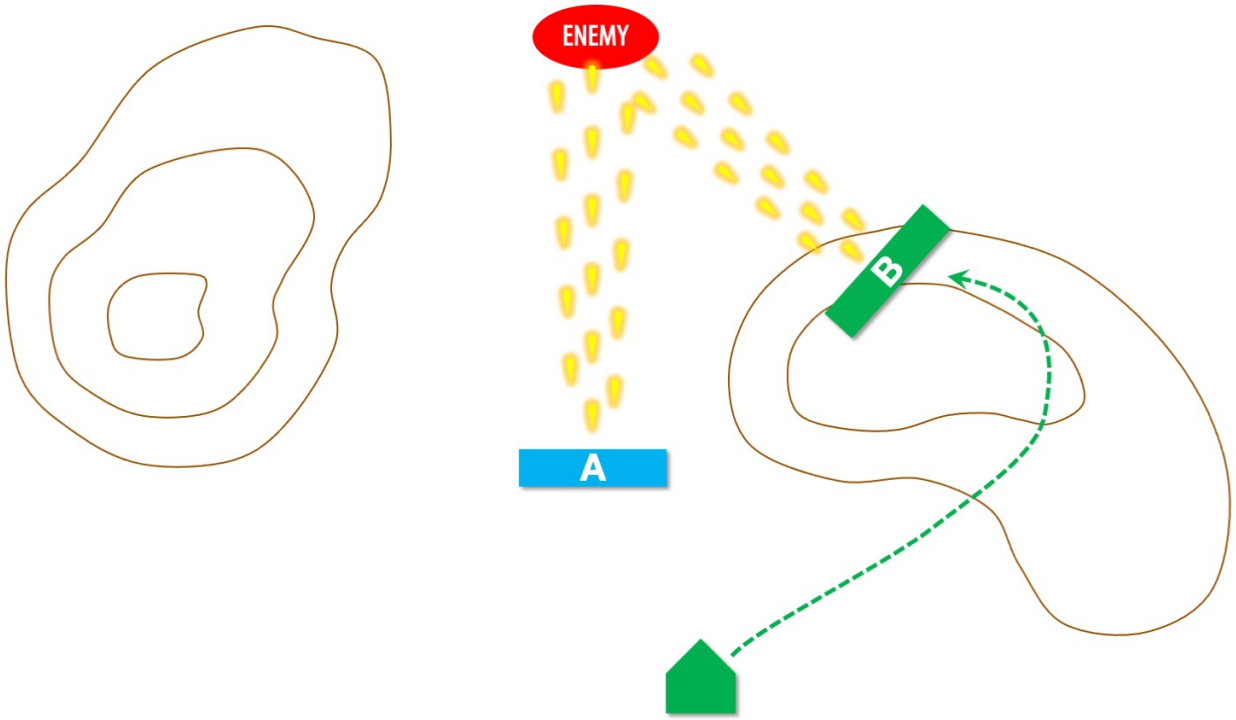
The maneuver begins like most maneuvers, with one team making contact with the enemy, executing an immediate action drill and returning fire. In this case, the trail team is already echeloned to the right because of the proximity of high ground and the possibility of enemies hiding on the other side of the hill. We also don't need to specify where to place the machine gun or the squad leader. The squad leader may choose to attach the gun to either team. The squad leader can also choose to remain with the gun or attach to the opposite team. If the squad leader is already integrated into one team or the other (as discussed in the organization chapter) then obviously he/she will remain with that team.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUNDING TO TACTICAL L

STEP 2: SL Bounds Trail Team to Advantageous Terrain

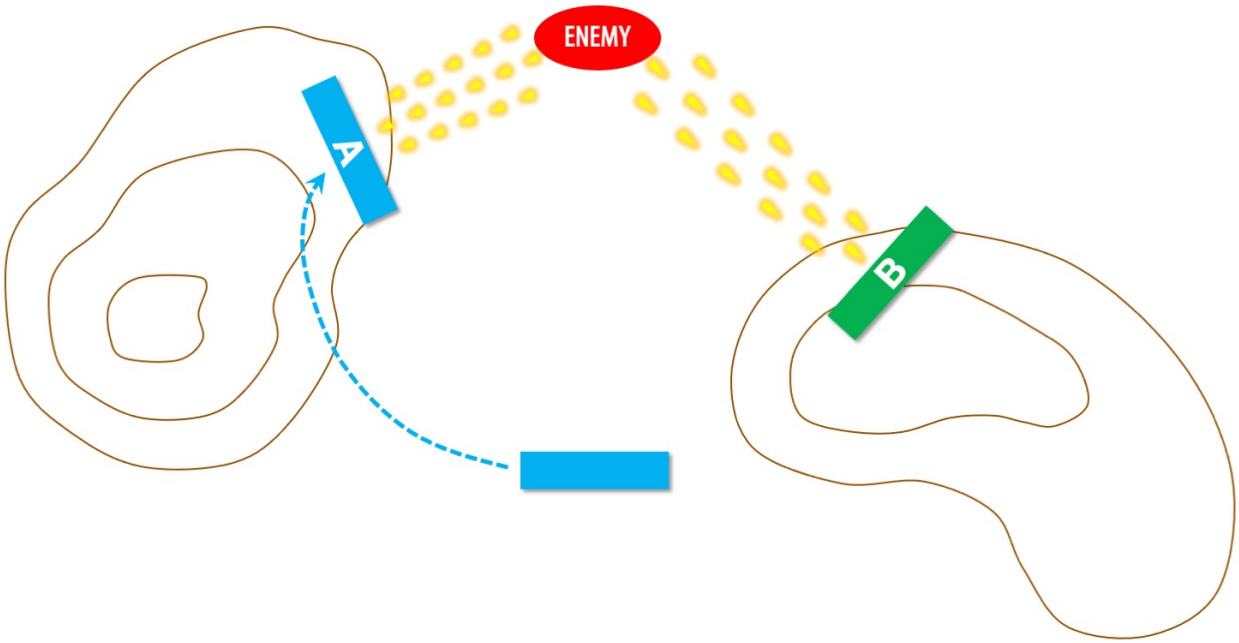
Unlike in the traditional battle drill, the squad leader will aim to get more weapons into the fight as soon as possible. This might mean bringing both teams on-line next to each other. However, it is better for the squad leader to pick a piece of terrain that offers an additional tactical advantage for the first bound location. The team already in contact is most likely not on ideal terrain since it probably had to get down and return fire immediately once it unexpectedly made contact with the enemy. Therefore, the squad leader should start improving his/her tactical advantage right away by bounding elements to advantageous terrain. Advantageous terrain might include high ground or terrain with better cover/concealment or observation/fields of fire. It is also advisable if possible, for the squad leader to start increasing the angle between the two bounding teams, working towards a 90-degree "tactical L" as an ultimate goal. In the example below, B Team is able to take advantage of some terrain to mask its movement while bounding to its first position.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUNDING TO TACTICAL L

STEP 3: Next Bound Achieves Tactical L

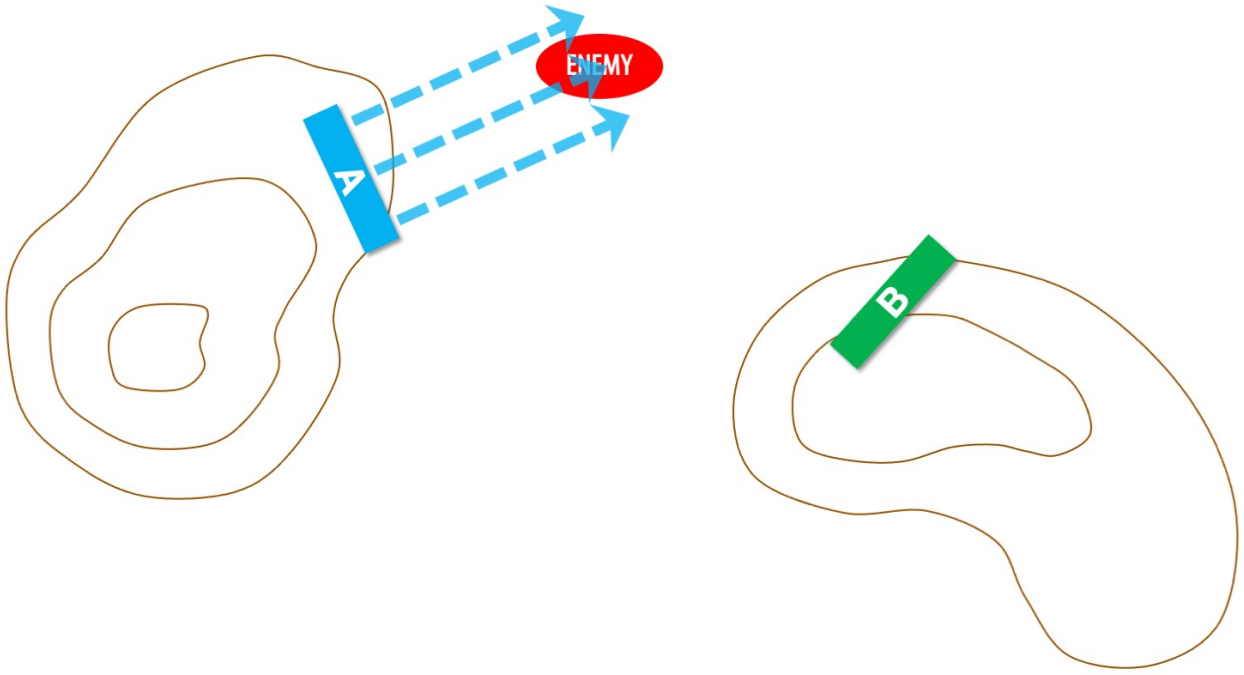
Once B Team is in position laying down suppressive fire on the enemy, A Team can bound forward and to the left to occupy the next piece of advantageous terrain. In this case, A Team is not able to take advantage of terrain to mask its movement but the high ground to the rear of its firing position will help prevent the team from skylining. No piece of terrain or route to get there is perfect. The leader must determine the best bounding locations based on this situation. In the example below, the two teams have achieved a "tactical L" meaning the enemy is taking fire from two perpendicular (90-degree) directions. This makes it difficult or impossible for the enemy to take cover since taking cover from one direction of fire will generally expose him to the other direction of fire. By continuing to attack by fire from this tactical L position, you will be probably be able to destroy the enemy with fire alone.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUNDING TO TACTICAL L

STEP 4: One Team Can Assault if Necessary

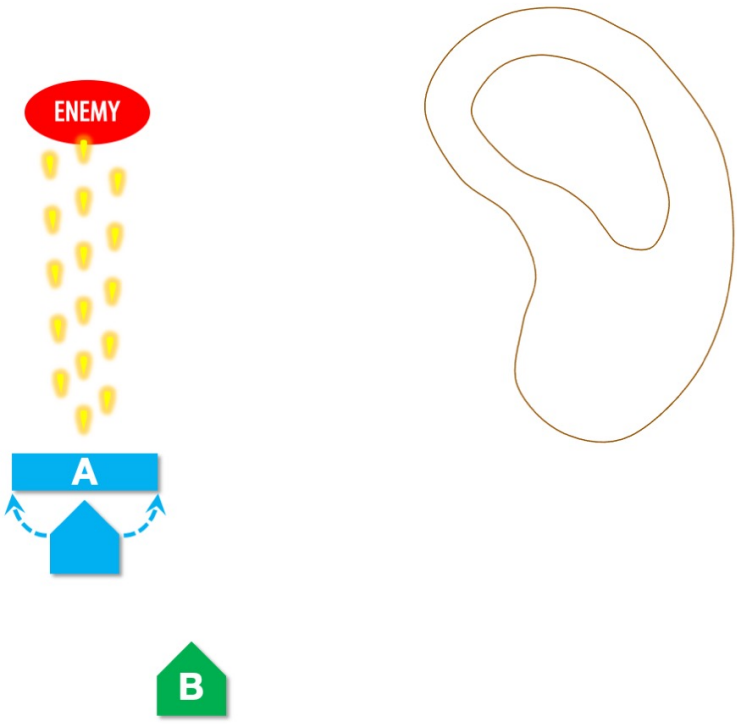
While you might be able to destroy the enemy with fire alone since he is caught in a 90-degree crossfire, you may still have to assault through or choose to assault through for some reason. In this case, A Team is close enough to assault while B Team ceases or shifts fire. In most cases, it is advisable to cease fire rather than shifting fire or lifting fire, especially at night. While shifting fire makes sense in a controlled environment like a live-fire range, it is difficult to accomplish safely in a real combat situation, especially at night or under limited visibility. That is not to say you cannot shift fire but if you choose that option, make sure you have redundant control measures and communications in place to reduce the risk of friendly fire.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUND TO SUPPORT POSITION

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

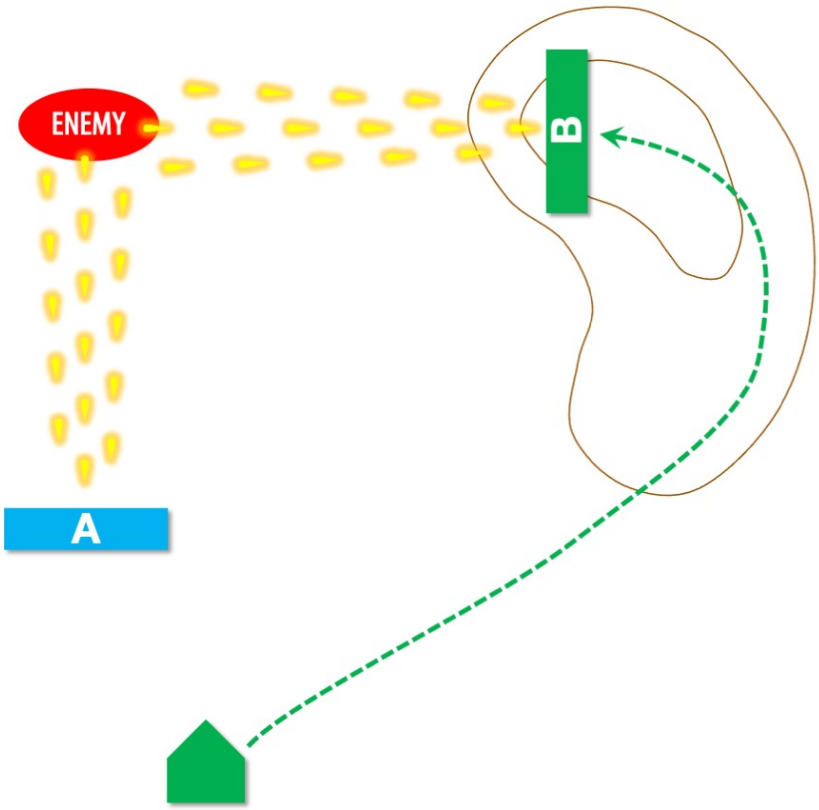
In some cases the team that initially makes contact might not be in a good position to provide supporting fire. Maybe there is no cover and concealment available or maybe it is difficult to see the enemy. For this example, we will say that A Team cannot see the enemy well because there is tall grass between A Team and the enemy position. Therefore, A Team cannot provide effective supporting fire because of lack of cover and poor observation. A Team will still get on-line and lay down suppressive fire as well as they can.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUND TO SUPPORT POSITION

STEP 2: Trail Team Bounds to Support-by-Fire Position

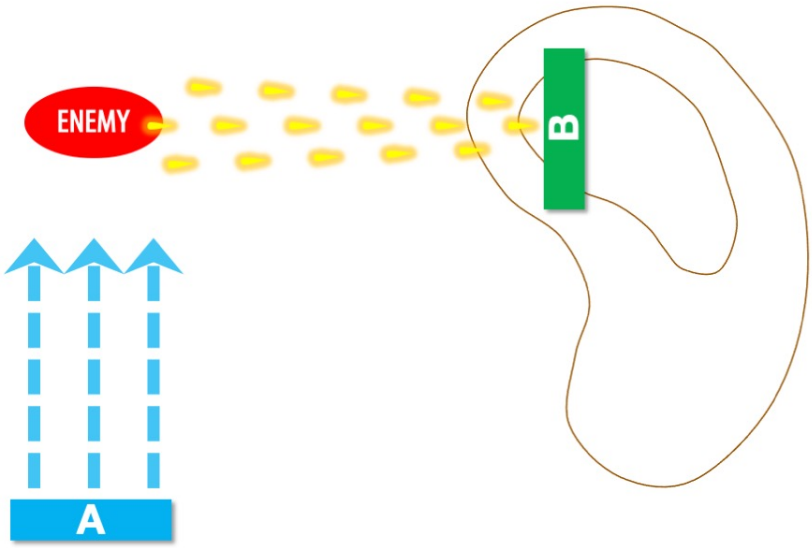
In some cases, the team that initially makes contact might not be in a good support position but the squad leader may see a good potential support position nearby. In the illustration below, the high ground to the right offers a good support position and the terrain offers some masking to allow the trail team to move into the support position undetected. A Team will not be able to lay down effective suppressing fire but they can at least harass the enemy and distract them to help B Team move into the support position safely. In general, because the squad leader has identified B Team as the support element, the machine gun should move with B Team to the new support position if possible. Once arriving at the support position, B Team and the machine gun will begin to suppress the enemy force. It is also important to take distances into account. Bounding to a support position works better if the enemy and potential support position are not too far away. If the flanking element has to travel too far, it runs the risk of getting isolated or separated from the other team.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUND TO SUPPORT POSITION

STEP 3: Assault Team Bounds Through the Objective

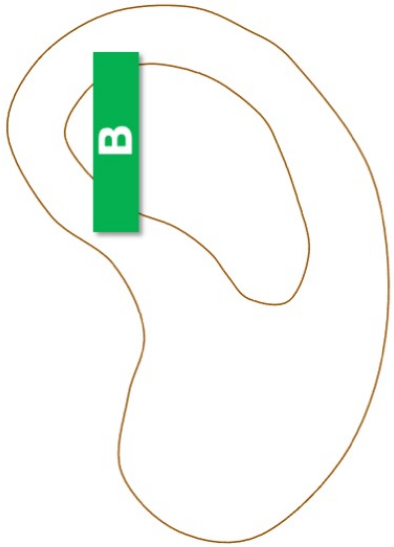
Just like the traditional battle drill, the support element provides suppressing fire while the assault element engages the enemy in close combat. However, the roles are simply reversed. Instead of the lead team (or first team to make contact) becoming the support element and the flanking team becoming the assault element. the flanking team provides support and the team to initially make contact assaults. As already stated, in this scenario there was tall grass between A Team and the enemy. While this terrain did not lend itself to effective supporting fire, it could provide good concealment for an assault element to creep forward into close combat range undetected.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUND TO SUPPORT POSITION

STEP 4: Assault Team Assaults the Objective

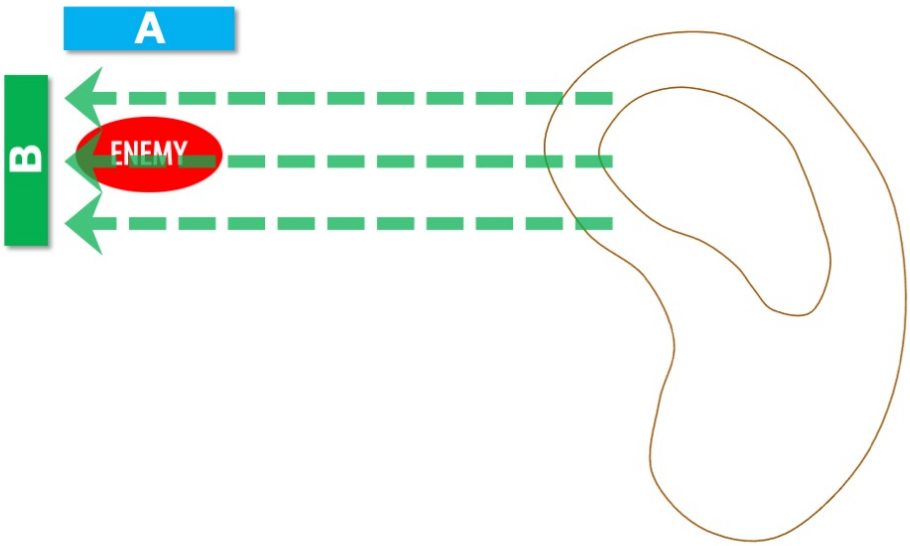
Once A Team is close enough to assault the enemy position, B Team will shift, lift or cease fire to avoid accidentally shooting members of the assault team. A Team will then assault the enemy position. As already stated, in most cases it is advisable to cease fire rather than shifting fire or lifting fire, especially at night. While shifting fire makes sense in a controlled environment like a live-fire range, it is difficult to accomplish safely in a real combat situation, especially at night or under limited visibility. That is not to say you cannot shift fire but if you choose that option, make sure you have redundant control measures and communications in place to reduce the risk of friendly fire.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: BOUND TO SUPPORT POSITION

STEP 5: Assault Team Reaches Limit of Advance

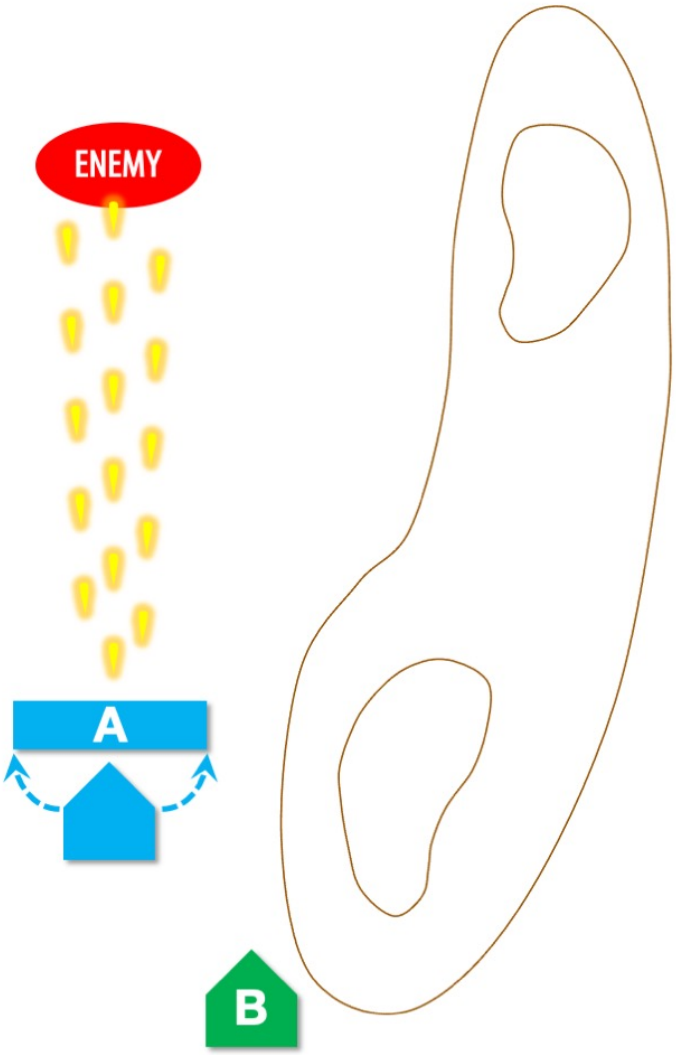
Once the assault element has eliminated all threats and reached the end of the enemy positions, the assault team leader or squad leader will call out "LOA" or (limit of advance) to get the assaulting element to stop and hold in place, remaining in a line formation. The support element will then pick up and move forward, also assaulting across the objective and forming a line perpendicular to the assault line. At this point the squad will perform "actions on the objective" which can include a number of different activities including checking the dead and caring for casualties.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: HARASSING ATTACKS

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

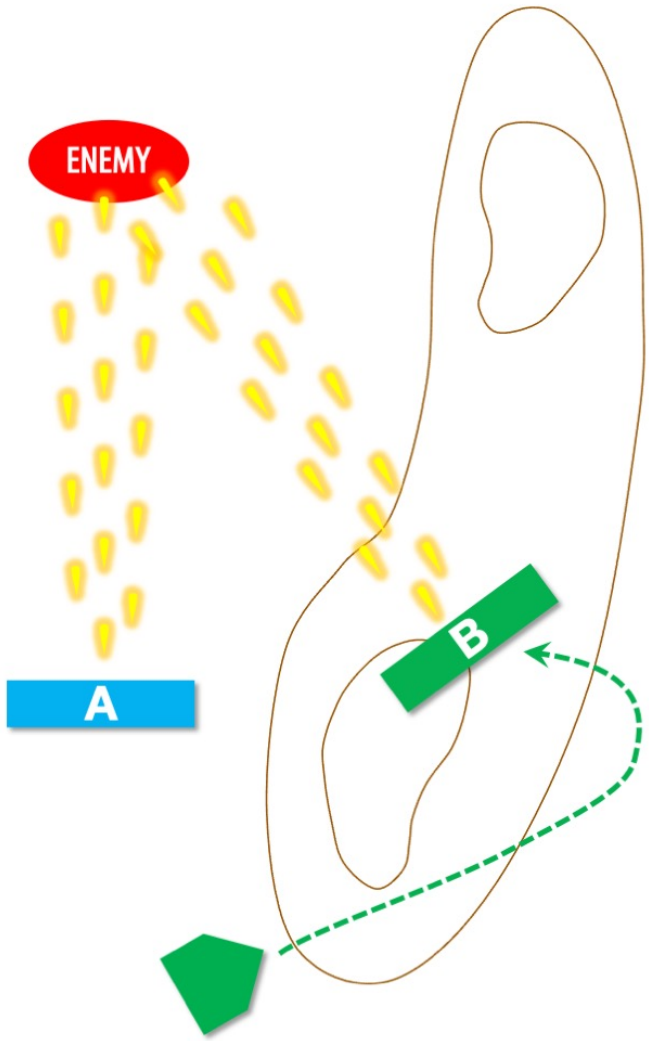
In some cases you might not want to become decisively engaged with the enemy but you will want to try to cripple the enemy, knock him off balance or disrupt his ability to pursue you or interfere in your operation. Depending on how the enemy manages risk and handles casualties, causing just a few casualties in a unit can seriously reduce that unit's effectiveness or even render that unit combat ineffective. If the terrain and situation allow, you could potentially launch some harassing attacks before breaking contact or continuing on to your ultimate objective. In this example, the lead team makes contact and the squad leader decides to use the terrain to the right to facilitate some harassing attacks on the enemy unit.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: HARASSING ATTACKS

STEP 2: B Team Moves into a Supporting Position

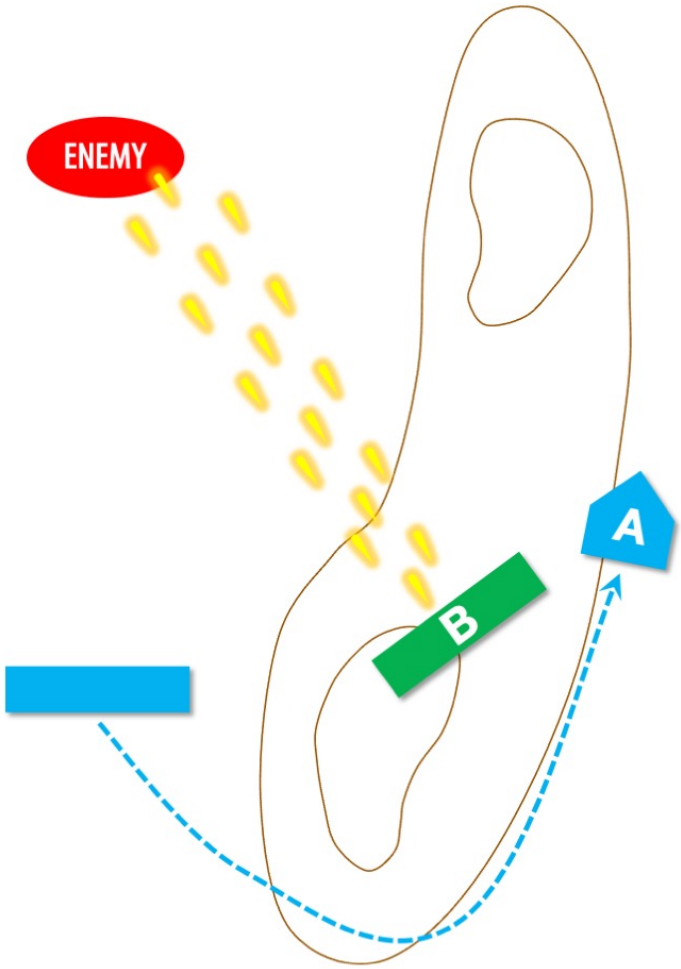
While the lead element lays down suppressive fire, B Team bounds around to the right, using the terrain to mask its movement. B Team moves forward into a good position to lay down supporting fire on the enemy.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: HARASSING ATTACKS

STEP 3: A Team Breaks Contact and Moves Behind the Hill

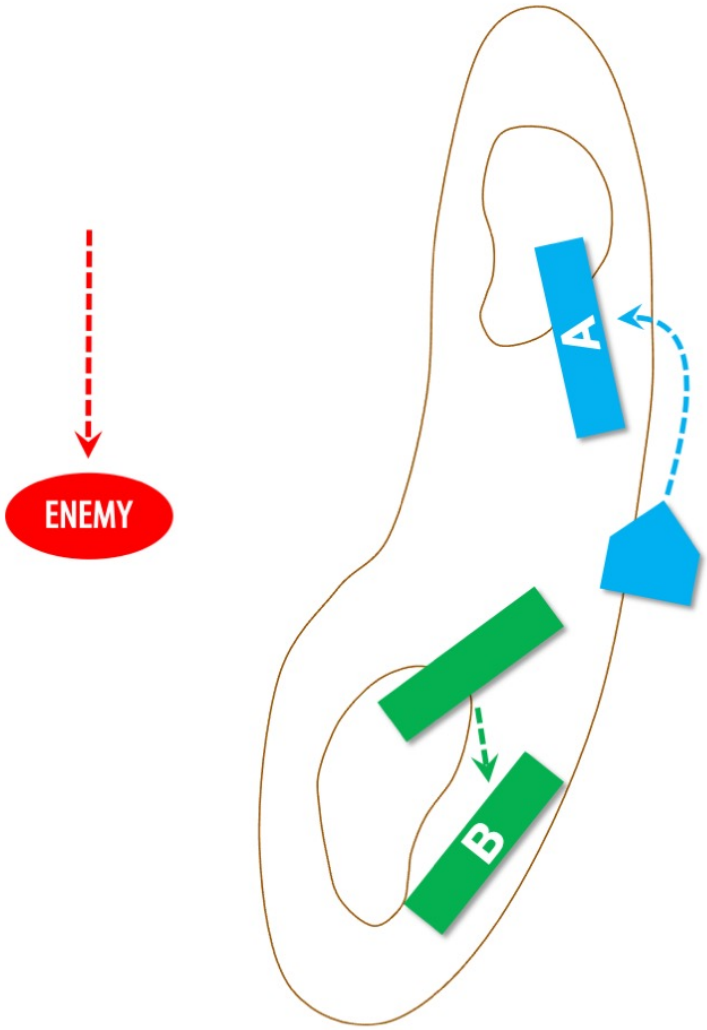
With B Team providing supporting fire, A Team falls back, disappears behind the hill and swings forward to a position where it is masked by the terrain. At this point the enemy can no longer see A Team and does not know where it is.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: HARASSING ATTACKS

STEP 4: Both Teams Break Contact and Displace

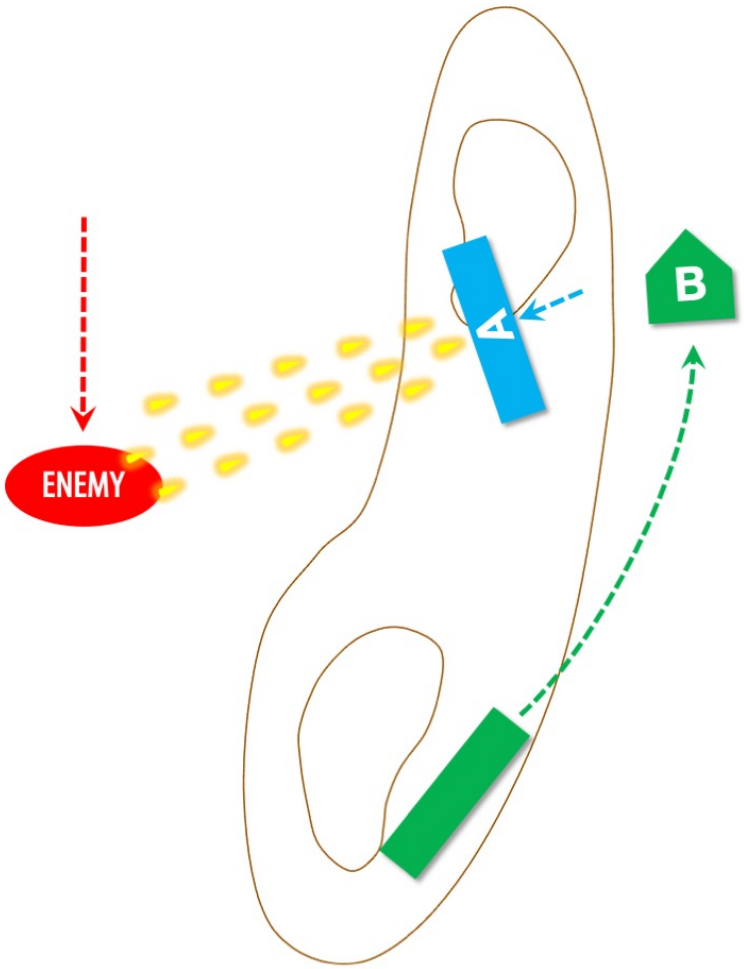
Once A Team is safely behind the hill, B Team can also pull back and use the terrain to hide from the enemy. At this point the enemy will no longer see your forces. Given where they last saw you, they may expect that you are still in vicinity of the lower hilltop, or perhaps that you have pulled back away from them in the direction you came. It is not certain what the enemy will do at this point, but it is possible that they might try to pursue and re-engage your forces. In this example, the enemy continues to move forward hoping to make contact or flank your forces. At this point you have broken contact with the enemy and you have the option to pull back and continue to break contact or you can attempt to re-engage and deliver a harassing attack.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: HARASSING ATTACKS

STEP 5: A Team Delivers a Harassing Attack to the Flank

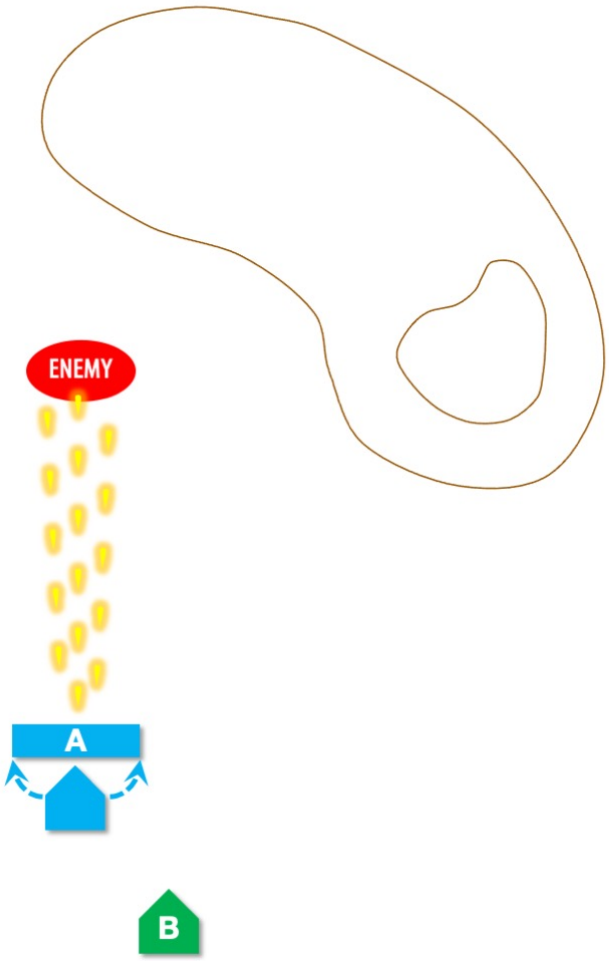
As the enemy advances, you decide to push A Team forward and deliver a harassing attack against the enemy's flank. You also decide that you want to pass by the enemy and continue moving towards your objective so you bound B Team forward so it can take up another firing position past A Team if necessary. At this point you have already hit the enemy once with frontal fire and have now hit the enemy again with flanking fire. It is likely you have caused some casualties. In addition, because you have stayed mobile and hit the enemy from different directions, the enemy may think your force is larger than it really is. For all these reasons, you have probably disrupted the enemy unit to the point where it will no longer try to pursue you. Even if the enemy unit was larger to begin with, you may have neutralized it as a threat.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: DEEP FLANKING MANEUVERS

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

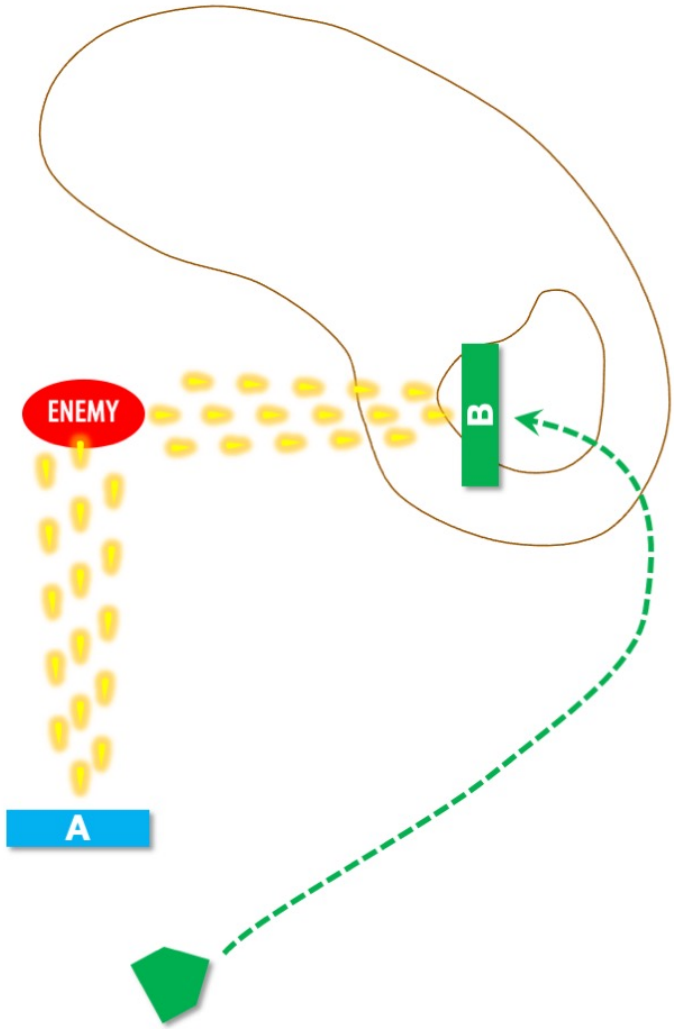
In some cases the terrain might not favor an assault from the front or from the flank and the best assault position might be behind the enemy. Circling around behind the enemy can also have other advantages since it forces the enemy to completely reverse direction 180-degrees to face you. Attacking from the rear might also help you achieve a greater level of surprise. However, the biggest concern with flanking all the way around to the rear is the time it will take and the distance you will have to travel. You might not be able to keep suppressive fire on the enemy the entire time and might need to momentarily break contact and then reestablish contact. Or you might need to keep the enemy fixed with harassing fire to conserve ammunition. In this case the lead element makes contact with the enemy, performs its immediate action drill and begins to lay down suppressive fire.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: DEEP FLANKING MANEUVERS

STEP 2: Trail Team Bounds to Support Position

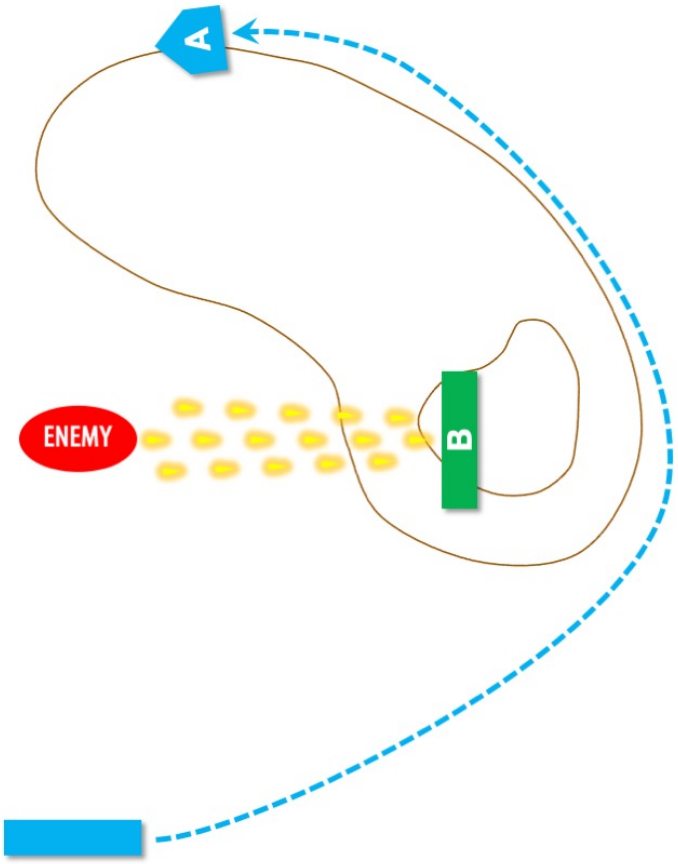
The squad leader decides that the best course of action is to attack the enemy from the rear. However, he realizes that he will not be about to get the squad all the way around in a single bound. It is also important to remember that you cannot suppress from one direction and assault from the opposite direction since you will be running into your own bullets. In this case, the squad leader decides to establish the support position on some high-ground about 90-degrees from the initial contact angle.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: DEEP FLANKING MANEUVERS

STEP 3: A Team Flanks Around to the Rear

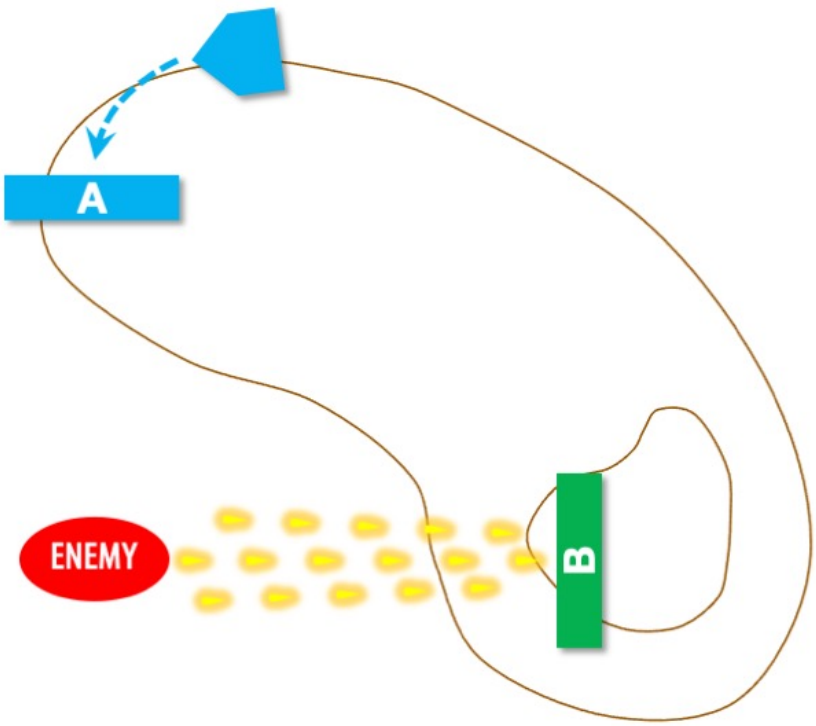
With B Team providing suppressive fire, A team uses the terrain to flank around to a position behind the enemy. As mentioned before, it might take a while for A team to flank all the way around so B Team might have to conserve ammo. Also, any time you are conducting a deep flank, you must remain especially aware of your surroundings since there might be other enemy units in the area that you did not spot initially when you made contact.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: DEEP FLANKING MANEUVERS

STEP 4: Assault Team Moves Into Assault Position

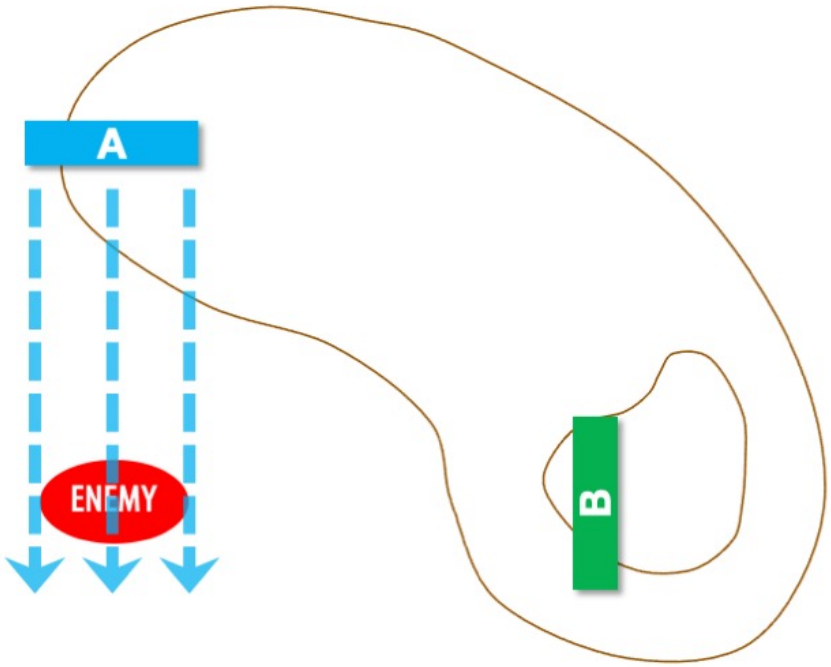
Once reaching a position behind the enemy, the assault team will come on-line and move into the assault position. It is especially important for the assault team to remain alert for threats to the flanks and rear since there could be other enemy units in the area.



TWO-ELEMENT COMBAT: DEEP FLANKING MANEUVERS

STEP 5: Assault Team Assaults Through the Objective

At this point the assault team will assault through the objective from the rear and the maneuver will play out like any other flanking battle drill. When attacking from the rear it is also important to consider any friendly units that might be operating behind your formation. Given that the maximum range of most infantry weapons is several thousand meters, you want to make sure your stray bullets do not fly back into friendly lines.



BATTLECRAFT
Offensive Combat with Three Elements

Adding a third element to combat maneuvers can give you many more tactical options on the battlefield. However, adding a third element also increases the complexity of any maneuver and makes the battle more difficult to control. In general, units should master two-element maneuvers first and only progress to three-element maneuvers when they have a baseline of experience. Two-element maneuvers are simple, fast, easy to control and can bring victory in most situations. Effectively adding a third element can allows the unit to gain some additional advantage such as destroying more enemy forces or mitigating risk caused by unknown variables. The following pages contain a few examples of how to incorporate a third element into your tactical maneuvering.

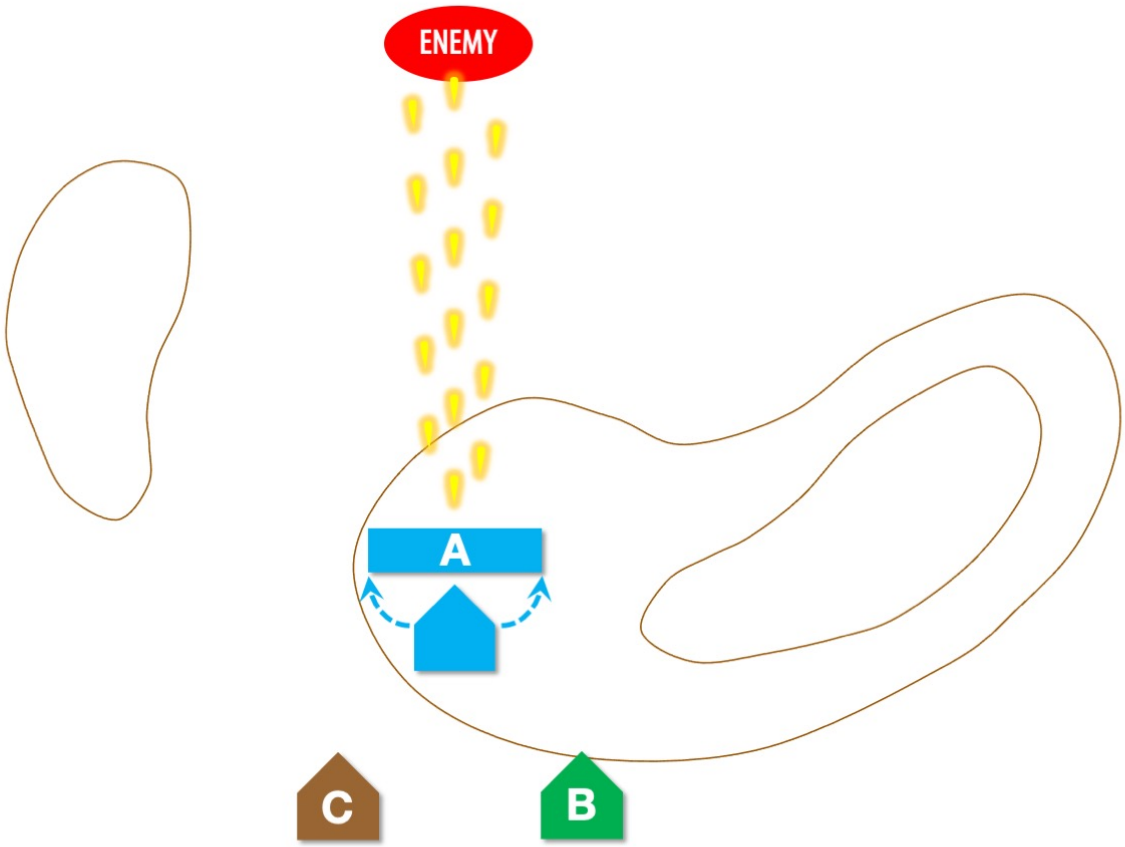
While most of the examples on the following pages depict a standard squad with three teams for demonstration purposes, the three "elements" in the tactical maneuvers described do not necessarily have to be teams. Two elements could be a teams while the third might be a machine gun. In short, three-element maneuver does not mean you necessarily have three teams. It means there are three moving pieces in the maneuver itself.

The examples that follow are not designed to be executed exactly as described, in a rigid manner. They are rather intended to illuminate flexible, tactical concepts that can apply to many situations. We have tried to focus on the tactical concepts that are the most effective and most likely to prove useful in a real combat scenario. The section is labeled as "offensive combat" since in most cases, the types of maneuvers described are most applicable to the offense. However, at the squad level, the lines between offense and defense can blur and the maneuvers in the following pages could also potentially apply to defensive combat.

THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE SUPPORT

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

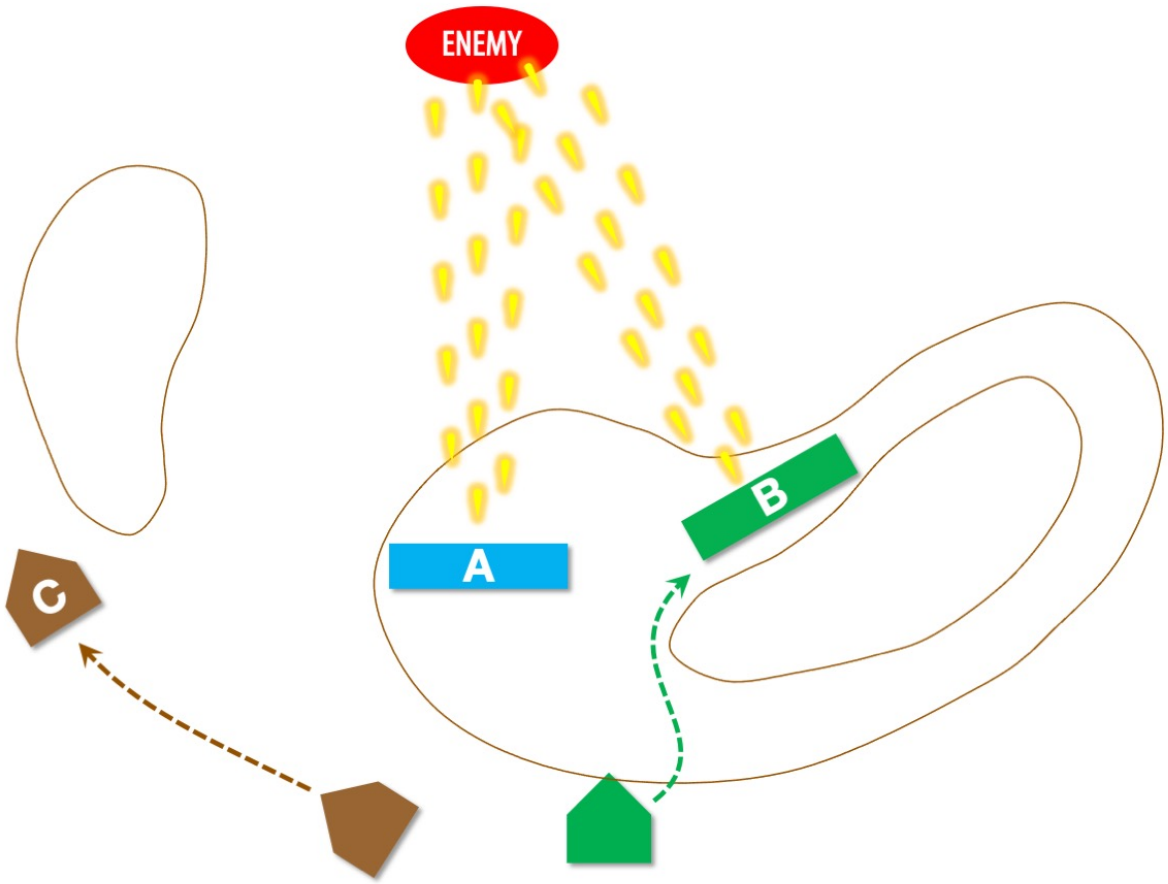
When engaging an enemy with three elements, in some cases you might want to use the third element to reinforce the support position in order to lay down more suppressive fire on the enemy. Reinforcing the support position also makes it easier to displace the support position and attached machine guns while engaging the enemy. Displacing the support position is particularly useful when facing enemies who have artillery support since they will likely call in artillery on your support position once you open fire. By displacing your support position you make it harder for the enemy forward observers to deliver accurate fires on your position. In the example below, the lead element makes contact with the enemy, comes on-line and returns fire.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE SUPPORT

STEP 2: B Team Reinforces Support Position

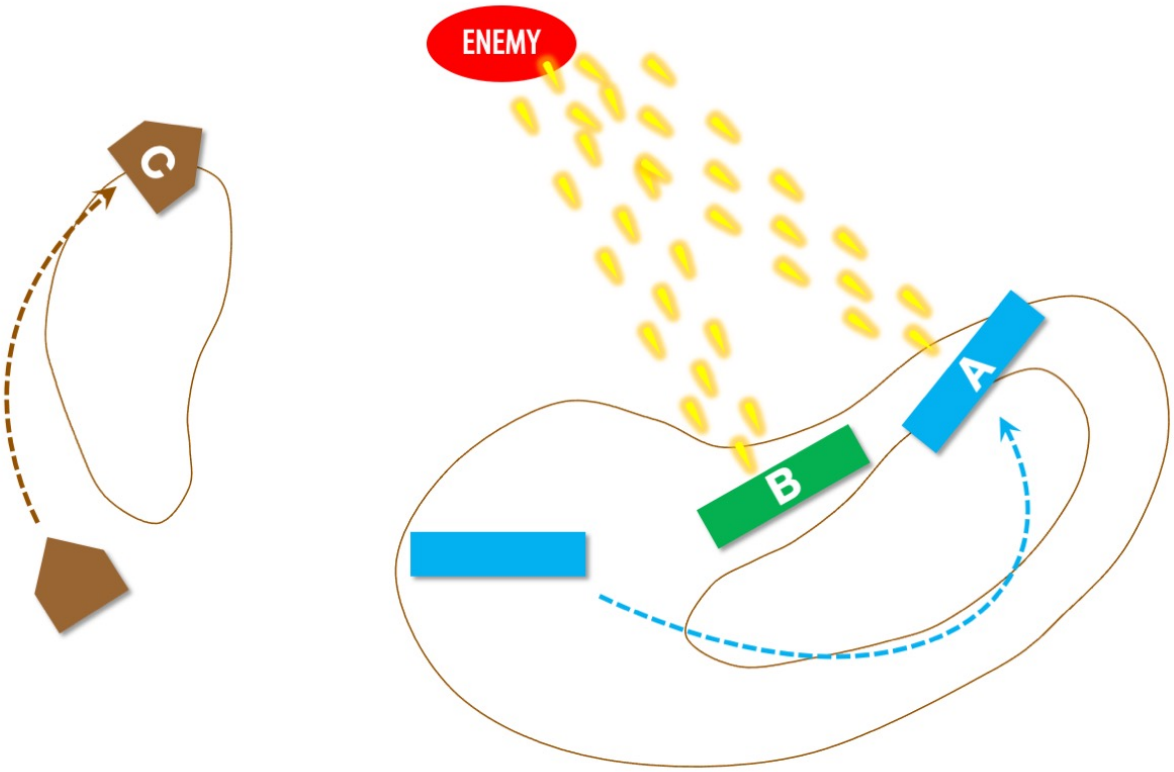
Looking at the terrain and the situation, the squad leader decides to send B Team to reinforce the support position and use C Team for the flanking element. B Team moves up onto the high ground to the right of A Team and opens fire on the enemy position. C Team begins to flank around to the left, using the terrain to mask movement as much as possible.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE SUPPORT

STEP 3: A Team Displaces

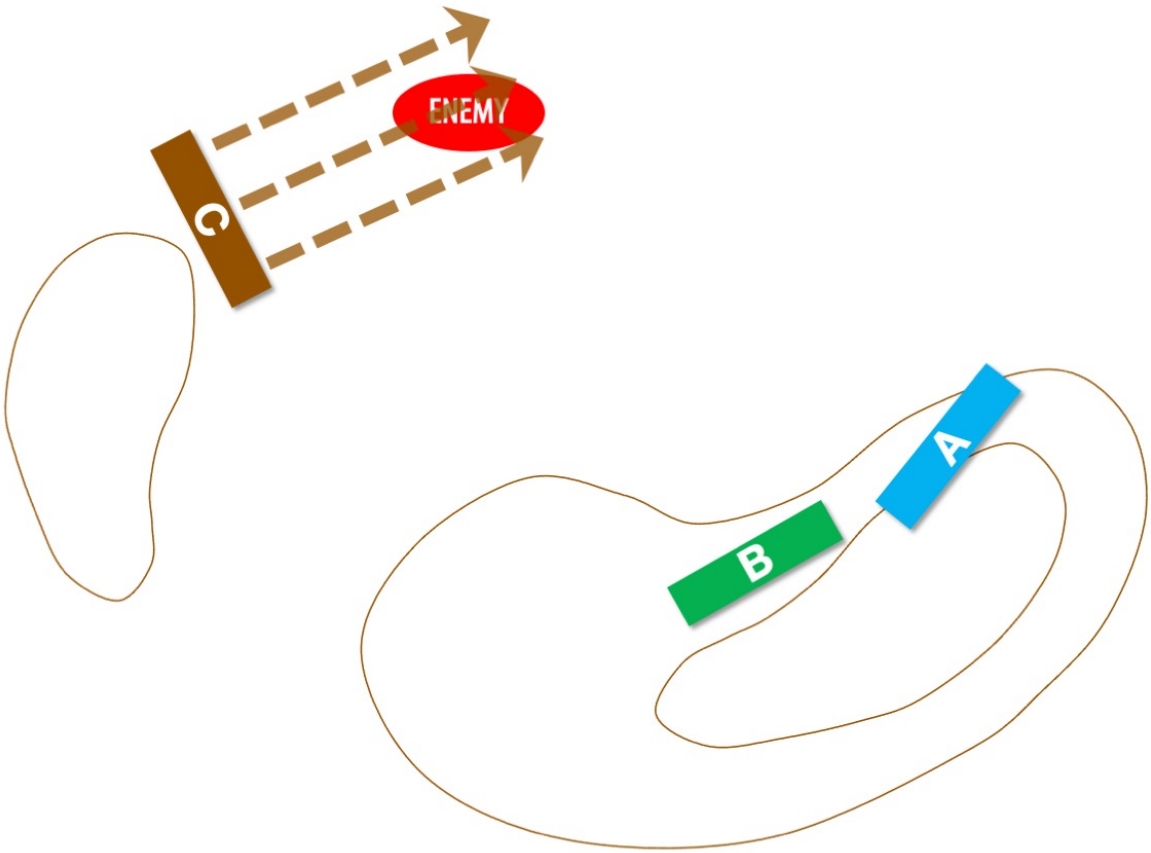
Once B Team masses an adequate volume of fire on the enemy, A Team displaces to a position on the right side of the high ground and then resumes firing on the enemy. C Team continues to flank around using terrain to its advantage. When displacing, A Team should take advantage of the terrain, cover and concealment as much as possible. When A Team and B Team are once again both firing on the enemy position, the center of the support-by-fire line will have displaced considerably from the location where the enemy first took fire. Meanwhile, C Team has continued to use the terrain to flank around the left side of the enemy position.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE SUPPORT

STEP 4: C Team Assaults Through the Objective

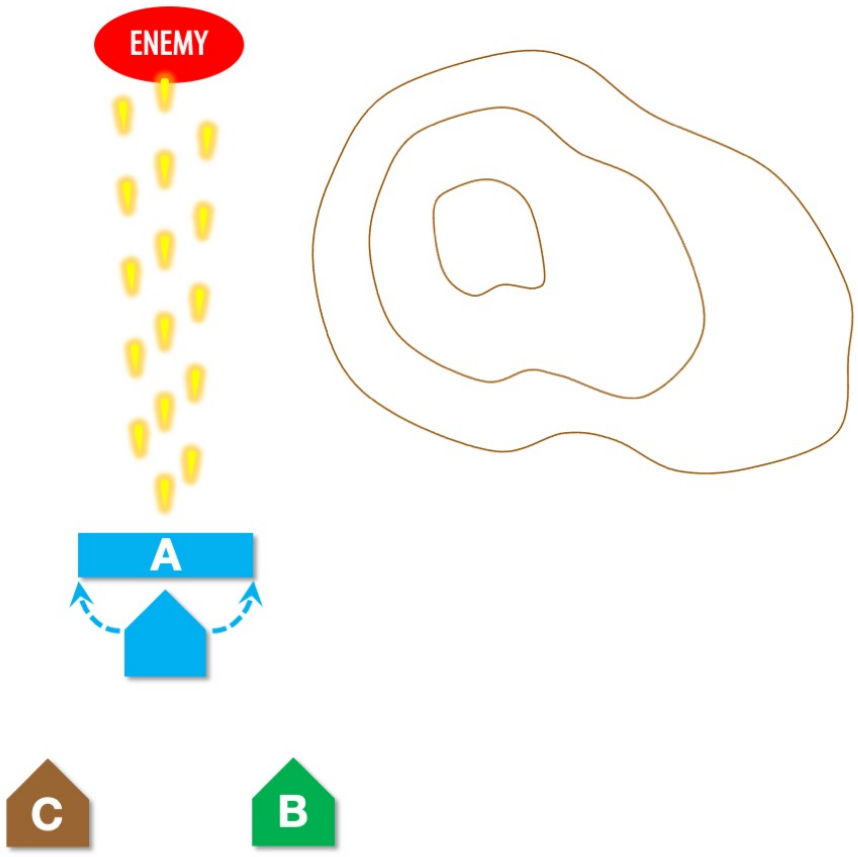
C Team reaches the assault position and assaults through the objective just like in any other battle drill. A Team and B Team on the support line can cease fire, lift fire or shift fire to ensure they do not accidentally shoot members of C Team.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE ASSAULT

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

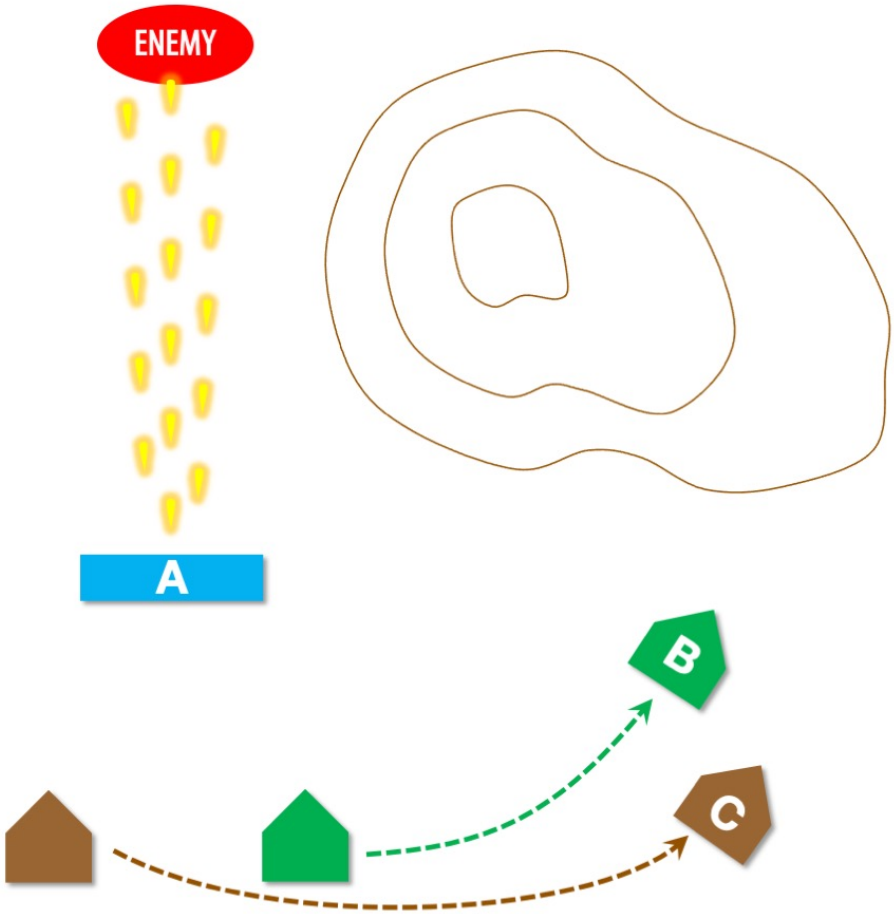
While one option is to use the third team to reinforce the support position, another option is to reinforce the assault/flanking element. There are a number of reasons the squad leader might choose to do this but one of the most common is uncertainty about what the assault element might encounter as it flanks around. As already discussed, the flanking element can discover additional enemy forces after moving out and find itself at a disadvantage or outnumbered. In the example below, A Team first makes contact and returns fire to suppress the enemy.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE ASSAULT

STEP 2: Assault Element Flanks in Echelon Formation

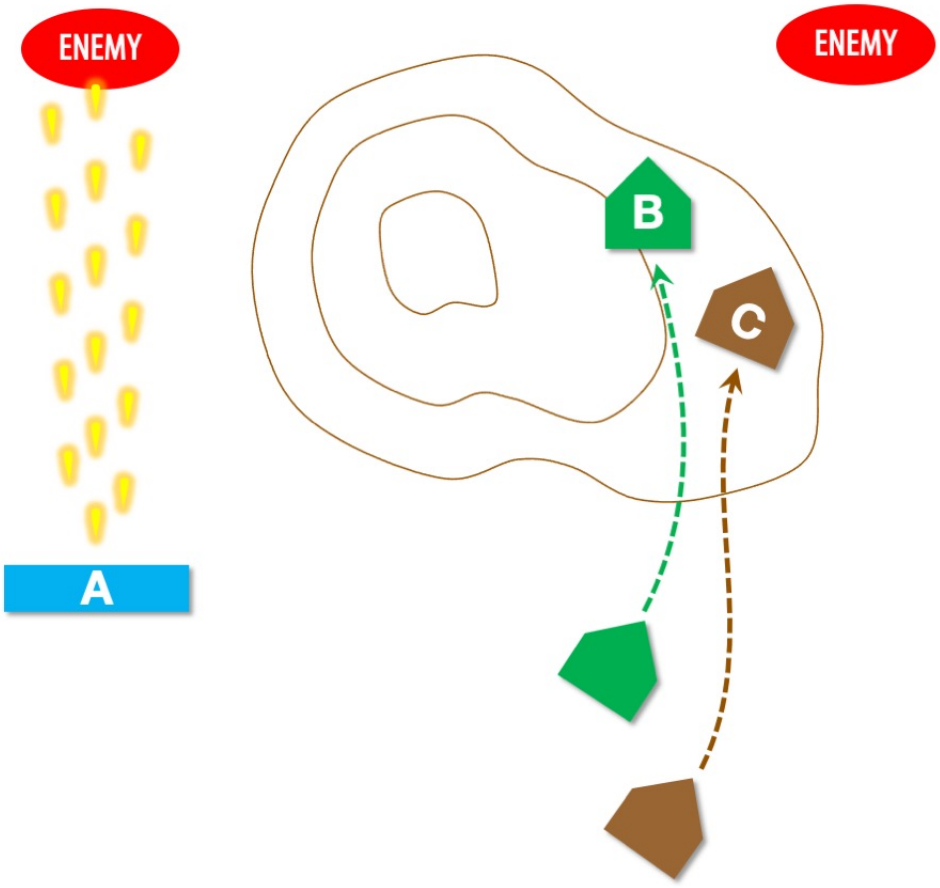
The squad leader anticipates there might be additional enemies hiding behind the hill and decides to bring B Team and C Team on the assault. B Team leads the flanking movement with C Team echeloned to the right. A Team continues to suppress the enemy position.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE ASSAULT

STEP 3: Flanking Element Identifies New Enemy Position

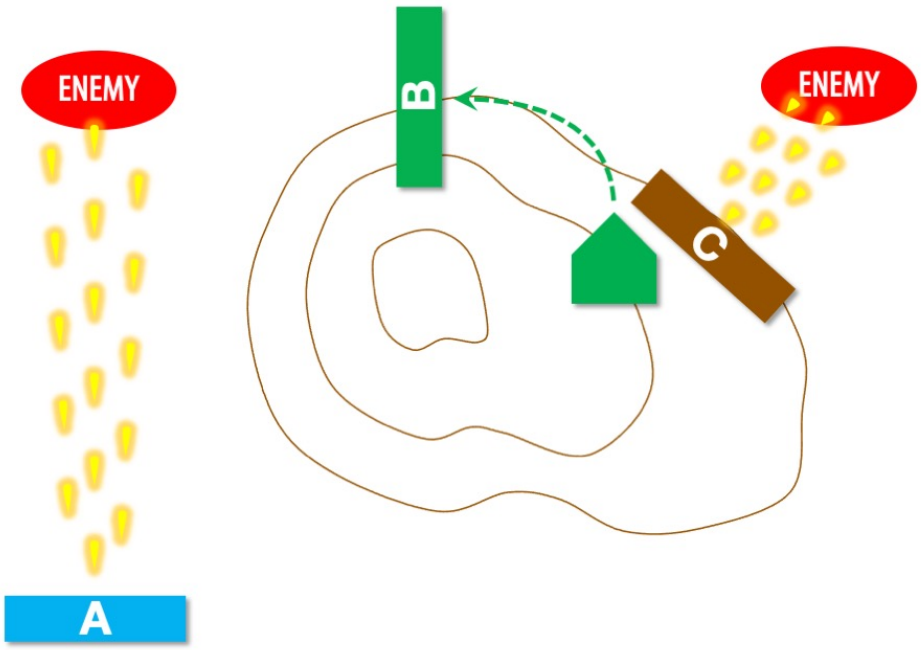
As B Team and C Team flank around, using the terrain as much as possible they identify an additional enemy position behind the hill as the squad leader had anticipated. Because there are two teams in the flanking element that gives the squad leader the ability to assign one team as a "local support-by-fire" to suppress and fix the new enemy position.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE ASSAULT

STEP 4: C Team Suppresses New Enemy Position

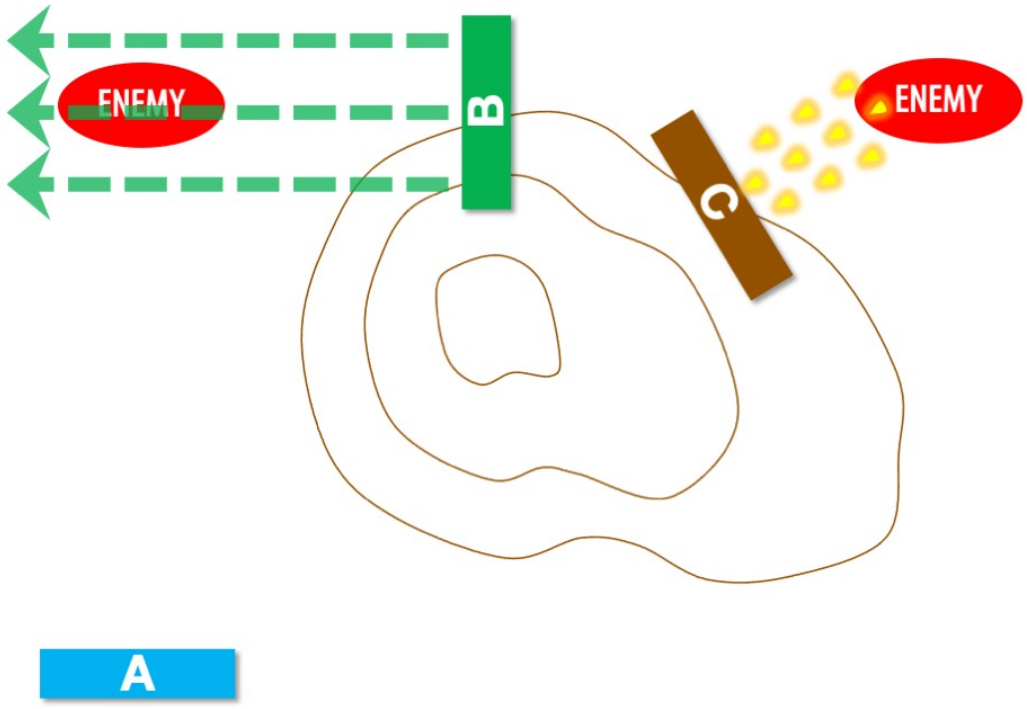
C Team comes online and lays down suppressive fire on the new enemy position. Once the enemy is suppressed or neutralized, B Team turns to the left and moves into the assault position. As much as possible, C Team should ensure that all enemies to the right are suppressed, and that B Team is not exposing itself to unexpected threats from different angles not covered by C Team. If the threat from the new enemy position is too great or difficult to suppress, the two flanking teams can focus their attention on the new position and either attempt to destroy it or break contact. The additional team in the flanking element gives the squad leader more options and additional security for dealing with unexpected problems like the example below.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: REINFORCING THE ASSAULT

STEP 5: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

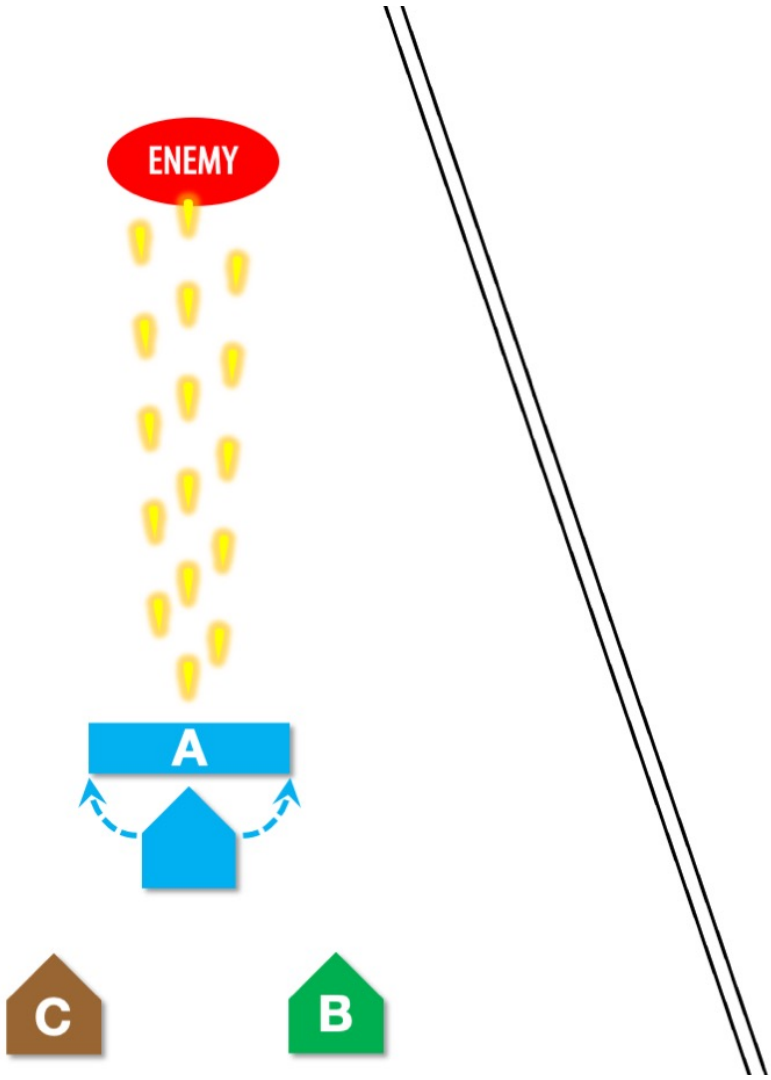
With C Team providing local support-by-fire, B Team is able to assault the main enemy objective. A Team will shift, lift or cease fire once B Team begins the assault. After the assault is complete, all three elements can make a decision about how to deal with any remaining enemy forces. C Team might become the new support position and A Team or B Team could flank around or attack by fire.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: HAMMER AND ANVIL

STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

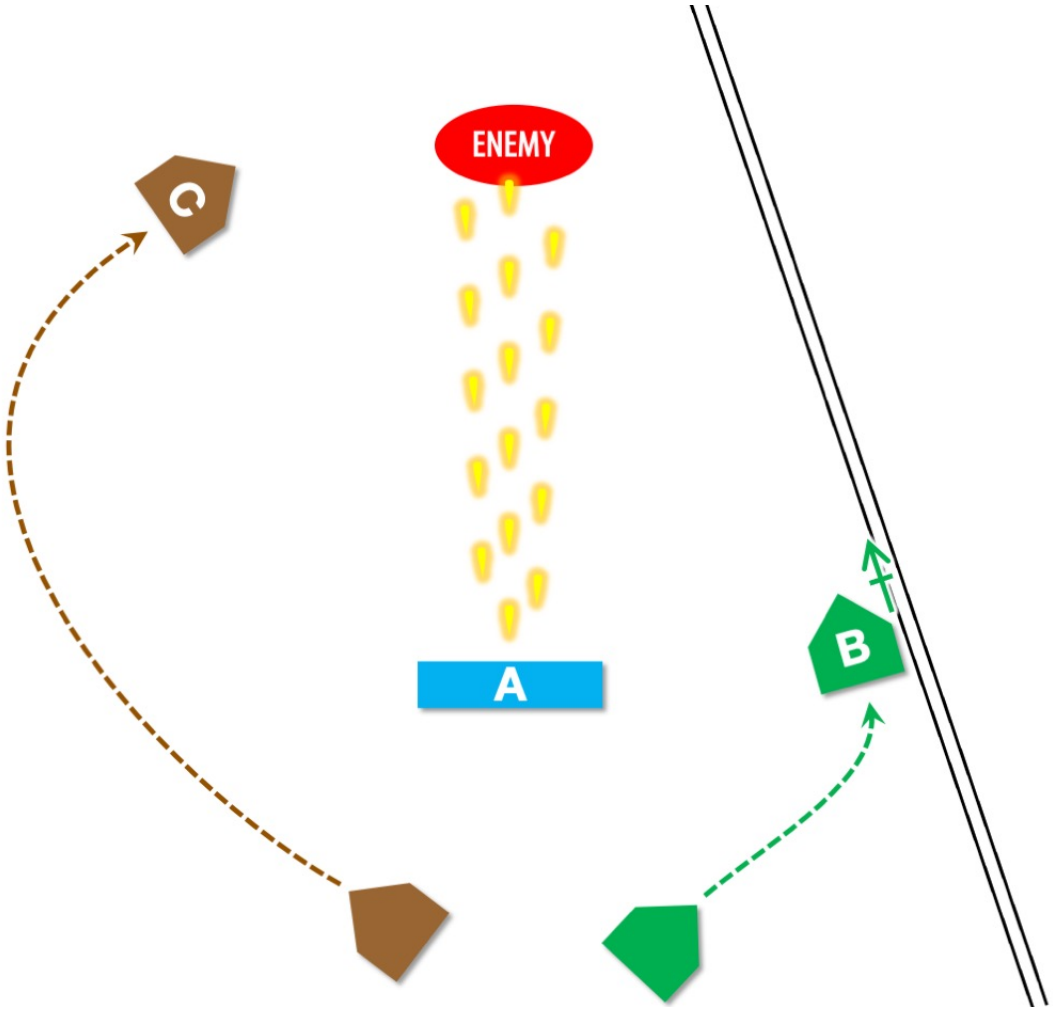
One problem with the traditional suppress and flank battle drill is that it is possible for the enemy to escape or break contact if the volume of fire laid down by the support element is not overwhelming. If your goal is to destroy the enemy force and you have three elements, you can use the third element to prevent the enemy from retreating or to set up an ambush along his line of retreat. There are many ways to do this but one of the simpler ways is to use a road or linear danger area to your advantage. In the example below, the maneuver begins with the lead element making contact, coming on-line and laying down suppressing fire.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: HAMMER AND ANVIL

STEP 2: B Team Sets Up MG on the Road as C Team Flanks

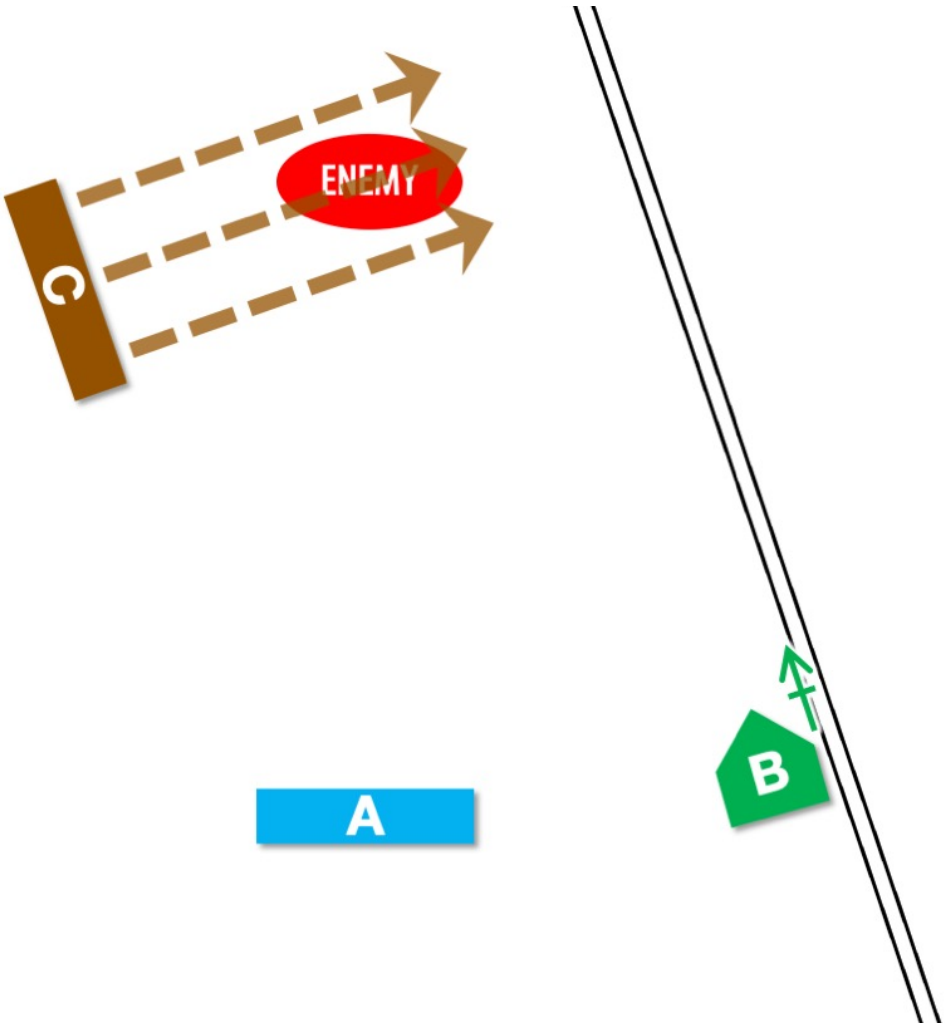
Once the lead time makes contact and begins suppressing the enemy, the squad leader decides to use the road to the right as an "anvil" against which to drive the enemy force. The squad leader sends B Team and at least one medium machine gun to establish a Principle Direction of Fire (PDF) along the road. At the same time, C Team will flank around to the right in a standard flanking maneuver against the enemy position.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: HAMMER AND ANVIL

STEP 3: C Team Assaults Through the Objective

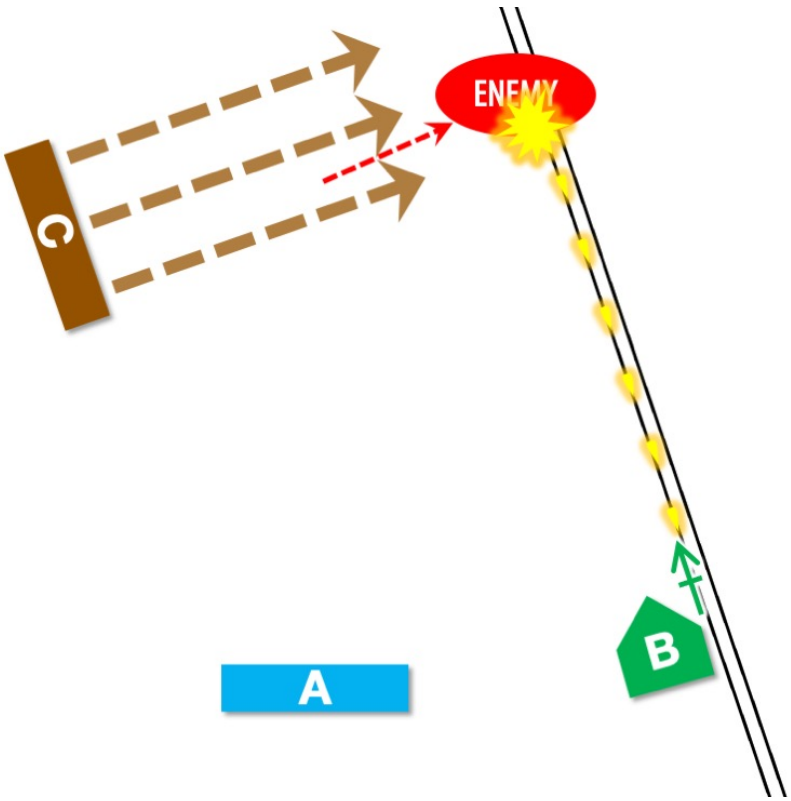
Once in the assault position, C Team will assault through the objective just as in a standard flanking battle drill. A Team will cease fire, shift fire or lift fire to ensure they do not shoot members of the assault team. B Team and the machine gun will maintain coverage of the road and remain concealed as much as possible.



THREE-ELEMENT COMBAT: HAMMER AND ANVIL

STEP 4: C Team and MG Engage Retreating Enemies

In a standard suppress and flank battle drill, unless the enemy is completely suppressed by the supporting element, there is nothing to stop the enemy from executing a break contact drill and bounding back, away from the assault element. In the example below, in order to fall back the enemy needs to cross a road. That road is covered by B Team and a medium machine gun. So, when the enemy falls back and exposes himself crossing the road, he will be hit by your machine gun bullets. The enemy will be especially vulnerable when crossing the road. If enemy troops are wounded and fall in the road it will create additional stress for the rest of the element since they will have to expose themselves to evacuate the casualties. If the enemy decides not to cross the road because of the machine gun, they will be fixed in place and vulnerable to C Team's assault. This is just one example of how the third element can be used to surprise or ambush a retreating force. In this example the presence of the road allows the ambushing element to remain close to the rest of the squad. In other cases, you might send the ambushing element further away along the enemy's expected line of retreat. This can achieve greater surprise but is also risky since you are splitting up your elements, probably at distances where they are no longer mutually supporting.



BATTLECRAFT
Defensive Combat

In general, squads will not conduct sustained, deliberate defensive operations by themselves. A squad simply does not have enough firepower or manpower to establish a deliberate defense able of repelling an enemy assault. Squads can form components of larger platoon, company and battalion defensive positions and we will therefore discuss the more detailed aspects of defensive infantry combat such as the development of engagement areas, establishment of primary, alternate and supplementary positions and the integration of fires and obstacles in other books focused on larger formations. This book will focus on the types of defensive combat that relate specifically to the squad itself.

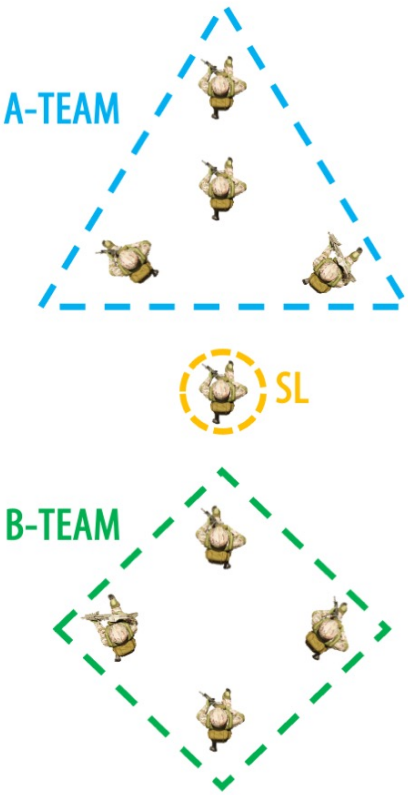
While a squad might not be able to establish a true, deliberate defense, the squad will establish defensive postures frequently during typical operations. Any time the squad needs to halt or occupy a position for any length of time, the squad is executing a form of defensive operation. As already mentioned, at the squad level the lines between offense and defense can blur and the squad might use defensive combat techniques while maneuvering against an enemy on the battlefield. Tactical maneuvers designed to allow the squad to pull back or break contact can also be considered defensive maneuvers since they do not seek the capture of terrain or destruction of the enemy.

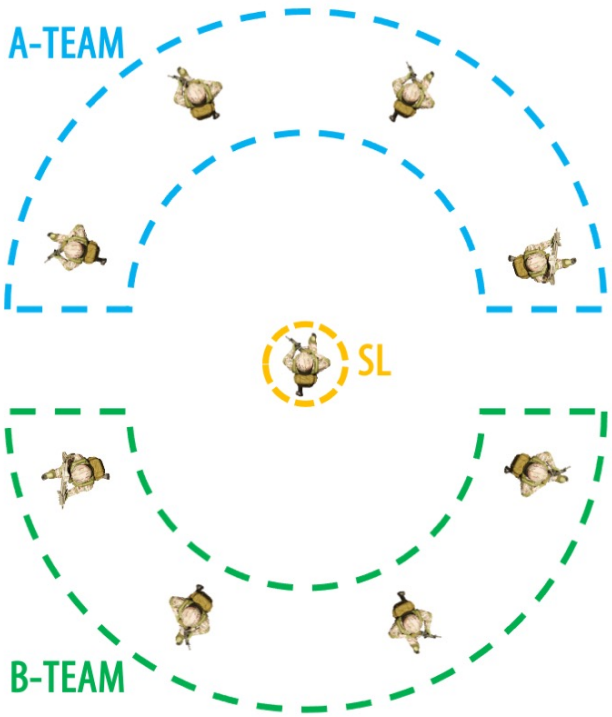
In short, the following section on defensive combat is abbreviated and simplified, focusing only on the most critical aspects of the defense at the squad level. We have saved a more detailed discussion of defensive operations for future manuals on deliberate defense, heavy weapons employment, and platoon/company-level operations. Such manuals offer a better context for studying defensive operations as a whole. However, the concepts in the following pages will still prove useful to small unit leaders and apply to any type of defensive operation at any level.

DEFENSIVE COMBAT: HALTS

Short Halt

When conducting squad-level operations, you might need to stop momentarily and assume a hasty defensive position. Perhaps the squad-leader needs to contact a map check or call higher headquarters on the radio prior to continuing on the mission. Whatever the reason for stopping, when conducting a short halt you want to be able to move out again right away, which means you will not take off your rucksacks. To minimize your exposure it is best for the squad members to take a knee however there might be some cases when this is not possible. Below are two examples of short halt formations. In the example on the right, the squad maintains its movement formation while providing 360-degree security. In the example on the right, the squad forms a circle and faces out. Finally, one of the most important factors in any short halt that is usually not depicted in manuals is that each individual trooper should take cover behind a tree or obstacle if possible. Thus, the actual formation will not look like a perfect circle but will conform to the terrain and available cover. The squad leader (and machine gun if present) can move wherever most needed in the formation.

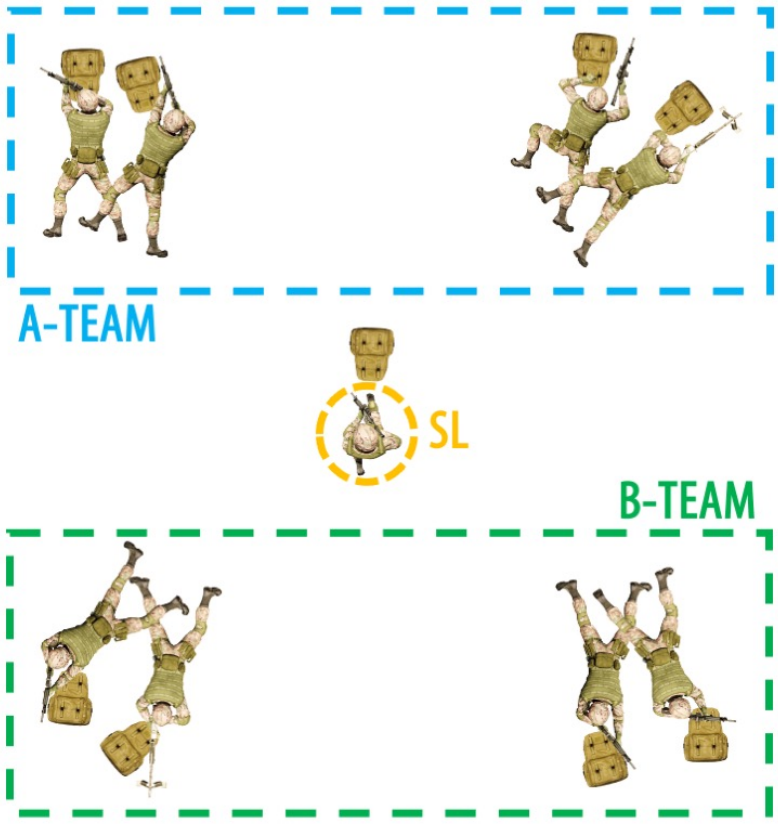




DEFENSIVE COMBAT: HALTS

Long Halt – No Medium Machine Gun

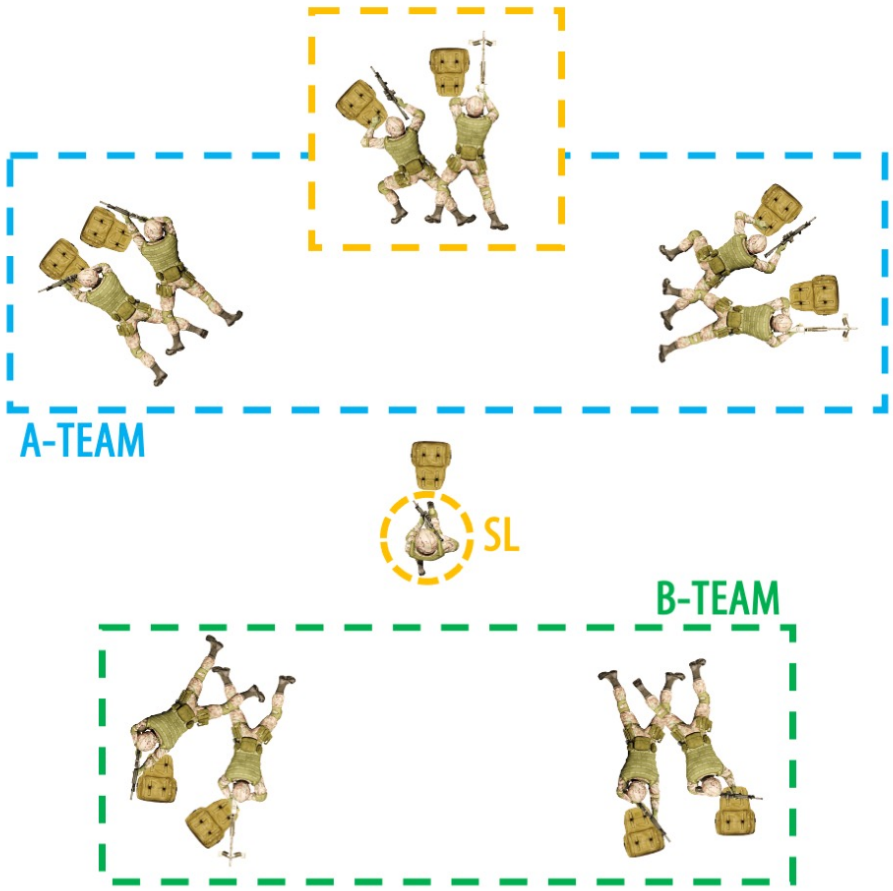
Kneeling on one knee with a heavy rucksack can prove taxing over time. Therefore, if the squad needs to stop for any length of time it is best to transition from the short halt formation to the long halt formation. The long halt generally entails removing rucksacks, going prone and placing troops in "strongpoint" positions of 2-3 troops each. After breaking into buddy teams, one trooper will provide cover while the other removes his/her rucksack and goes prone. Then the prone trooper will provide cover while the other trooper removes his/her rucksack. There is no one best position for the rucksack so it is up to you where you are most comfortable placing the rucksack. Keep in mind factors like visibility and the ease of accessing the rucksack. The rucksack can also sometimes provide some degree of cover depending on what is in it. When troops go prone, especially when fatigued at night, there is the chance they will fall asleep and fail to provide effective security. In groups of 2 or 3, troops can watch each other to stay awake. They can also alert each other to potential threats through touch. The technique of interlocking the legs can make staying awake and communication easier. The example below shows a long halt formation with a 9-person squad, no medium machine gun and four, two-person strongpoints.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: HALTS

Long Halt – Medium Machine Gun Attached

If you have a medium machine gun attached to your squad it can greatly enhance your security during a long halt. Many doctrinal manuals and schoolhouses suggest always moving the machine gun to the front of the formation (or 12-o'clock position). This can be a good option since the greatest threat is often to the front. However, it is better to place the machine gun where it is most needed based on the situation, which may or may not be to the front. The direction of greatest threat could be to the sides or rear. Also, there might be a position that offers the machine gun particularly good cover and concealment or observation and fields of fire. In some cases, you might want to move the machine gun a bit farther out to better cover a road, danger area or open area. In the example below the machine gun is covering to the front and the other two A-Team strongpoints have widened out and adjusted their sectors accordingly.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: HALTS

Long Halt – 2-Person and 3-Person Strongpoints

As already discussed, when conducting a long halt it can be useful to break the squad up into strongpoints. You can form strongpoints with either two or three troopers depending on the number of people in the squad and the number of strongpoints you wish to employ. Each strongpoint may or may not include a medium machine gun or light machine gun. One advantage of the three-person strongpoint is that it lends itself well to rest plans. You can have two people pulling security while the third person rests and then rotate as needed while maintaining 66-percent security. Or you can have one person pulling security while the other two rest and rotate, maintaining 33-percent security.

3

THREE-PERSON STRONGPOINT

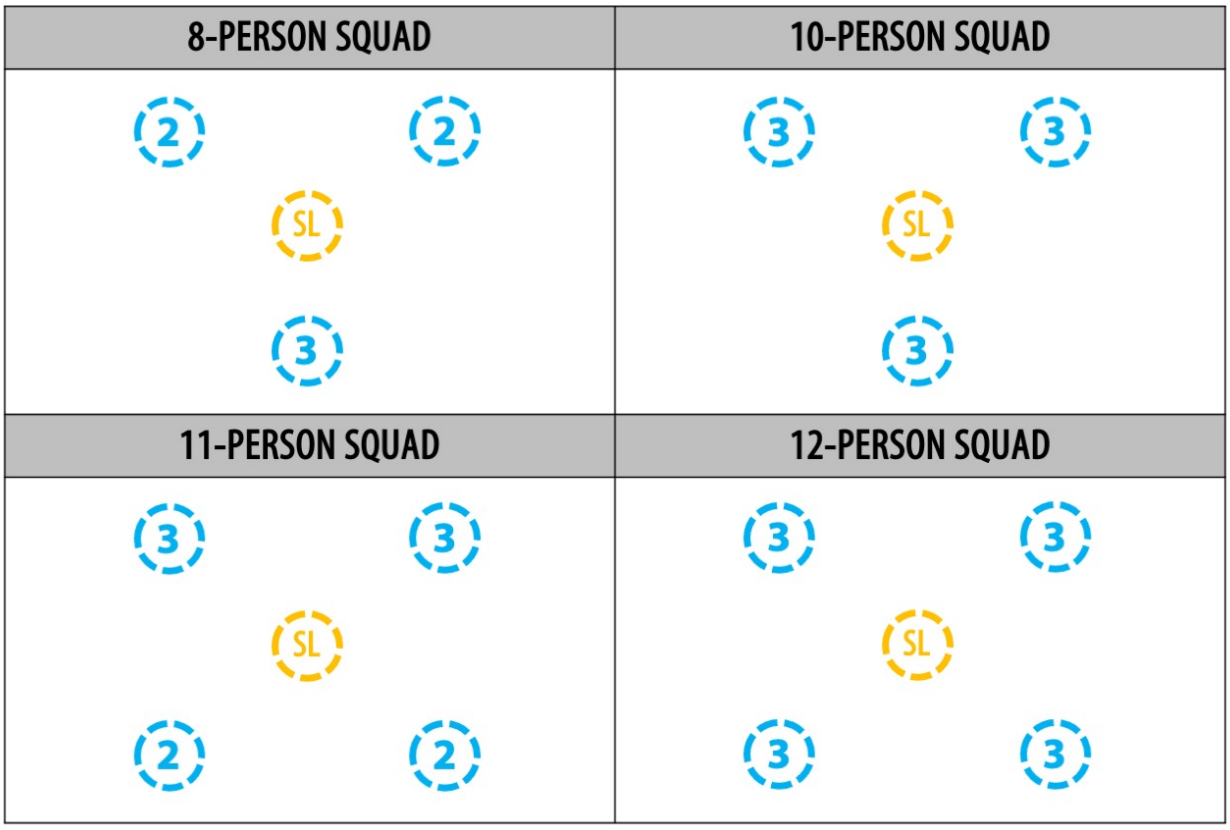
2

TWO-PERSON STRONGPOINT

DEFENSIVE COMBAT: HALTS

Long Halt – Different Configurations

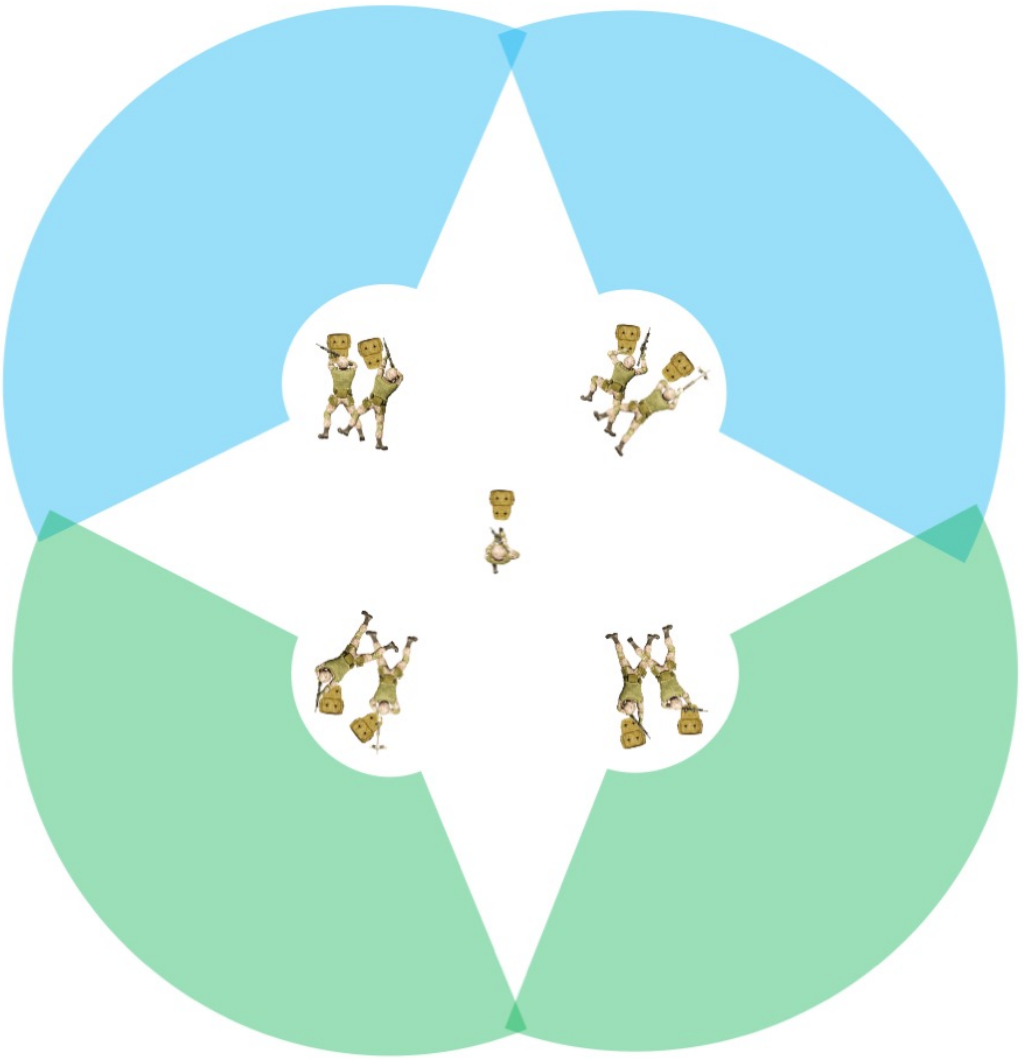
There is no fixed formula for how to set up your long halt. You can use any combination of 2-person or 3-person strongpoints. The examples so far have shown how to set up four, 2-person strongpoints with a 9-person squad, with and without an added machine gun. The examples below give options for 8-12 person squads, without a machine gun. Keep in mind these are not the only options. For example, with a 10 person squad you might choose to employ one 3-person strongpoint and three 2-person strongpoints instead of the configuration below. It is also very important to remember that the formations in real life will probably not be completely symmetrical. You should position the strongpoints in the locations with the best cover, concealment and observation based on mission requirements.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: ASSIGNING SECTORS OF FIRE

Overlapping Sectors of Fire

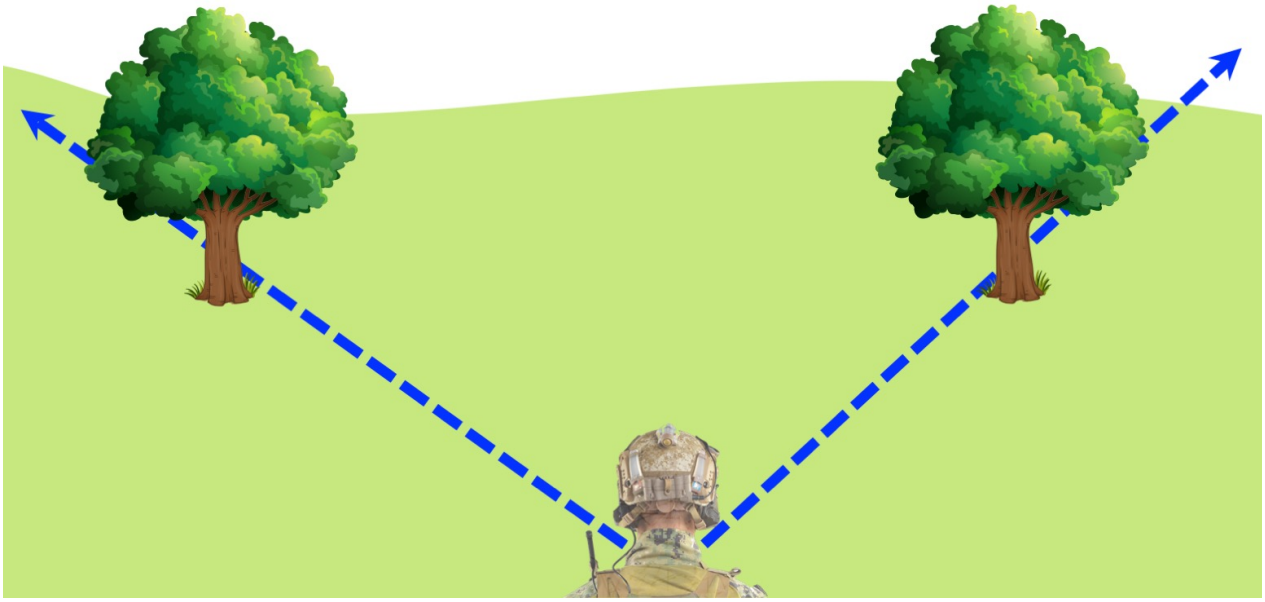
When remaining stationary for any length of time or occupying a defensive position, the squad leader should assign sectors of fire to ensure there are no gaps in the squad's 360-degree security coverage. In the example below of a long halt with four 2-person strongpoints, the sectors of fire are depicted in blue (A Team) and green (B Team). When assigning sectors, the squad leader should ensure that all sectors overlap so there are no gaps in coverage. It is generally best for sectors to overlap no further than 35-meters out, which is the approximate distance of hand-grenade range. You can assign sectors for each strongpoint or you can assign sectors for each individual trooper.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: ASSIGNING SECTORS OF FIRE

Left Limit and Right Limit

In order for sectors of fire to be useful, the individual troopers who are covering those sectors must have a clear idea of the left limit and right limit of their sectors. It is up to the squad leader (and/or the subordinate team leaders) to go from position to position assigning left and right limits to each position or trooper. When assigning left and right limits, it is helpful to use reference points on the ground if they are available. In the example below, the trooper's sector extends between the two large trees. It is also possible to assign sectors using specific compass azimuths. Writing down compass azimuths can be useful as a redundant measure. If a trooper forgets the reference point, he/she can pull out the compass to re-verify the sector. However, when under fire, troopers will probably not have time to reference their compass to determine their sector. If no reference points are available, the squad can plant aiming stakes to mark the left and right limits of each sector.



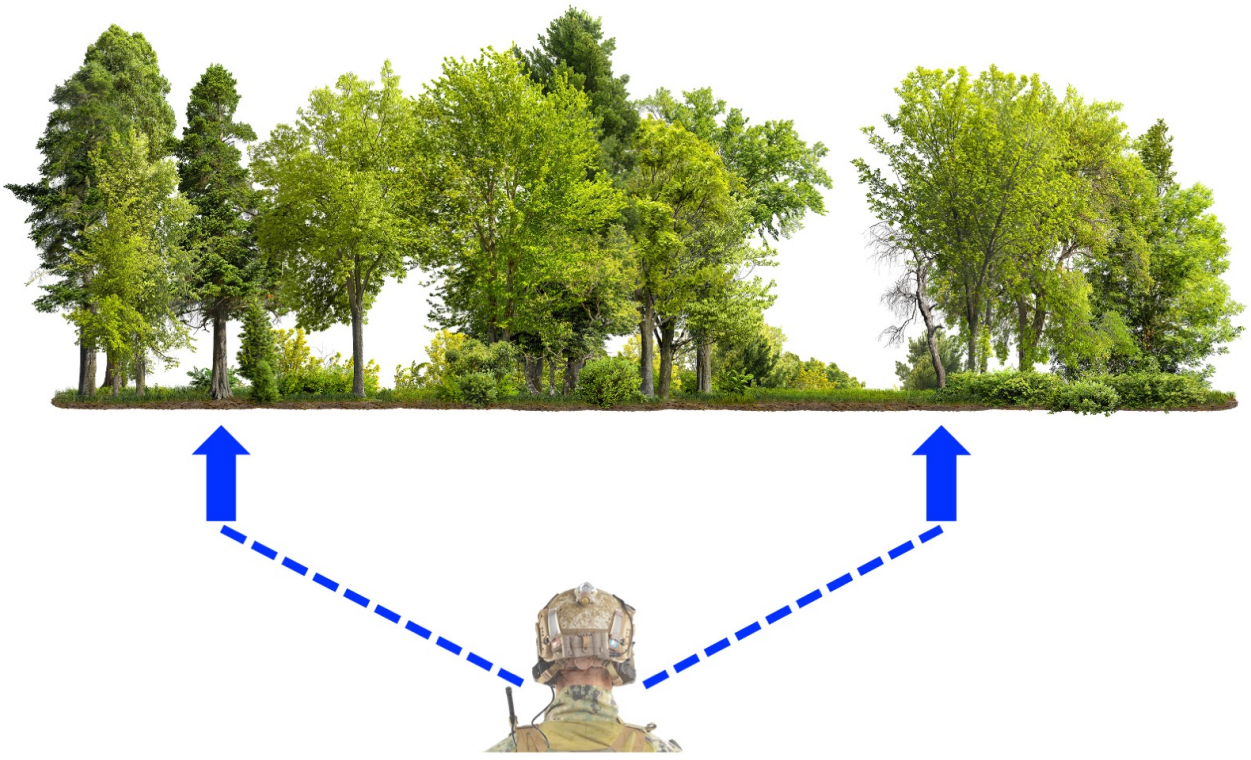
DEFENSIVE COMBAT: ASSIGNING SECTORS OF FIRE

How to Assign Sectors

It is very unlikely that there will be two large trees in the open in just the right position to mark the limits of a sector. In reality, the terrain is more likely to look like the picture below. It is a common mistake for leaders to move hastily and simply point and say, "your left limit is that dead tree and your right limit is the crooked tree… got it?" without bothering to verify that the trooper has actually identified the left and right limits. This is problematic, especially at night. Given the left and right limits depicted in the image below, what follows is an example of a more reliable way to assign sectors. Every time the leader asks a question he/she must get a response or confirmation from the trooper…

RIGHT LIMIT: You see the clump of trees right in front of you? Look to the right. Do you see the open area? Ok, just to the right of that open area is a dead tree leaning to the left with some dead branches coming out on the left. Do you see it? Yes? Ok that is your right limit.

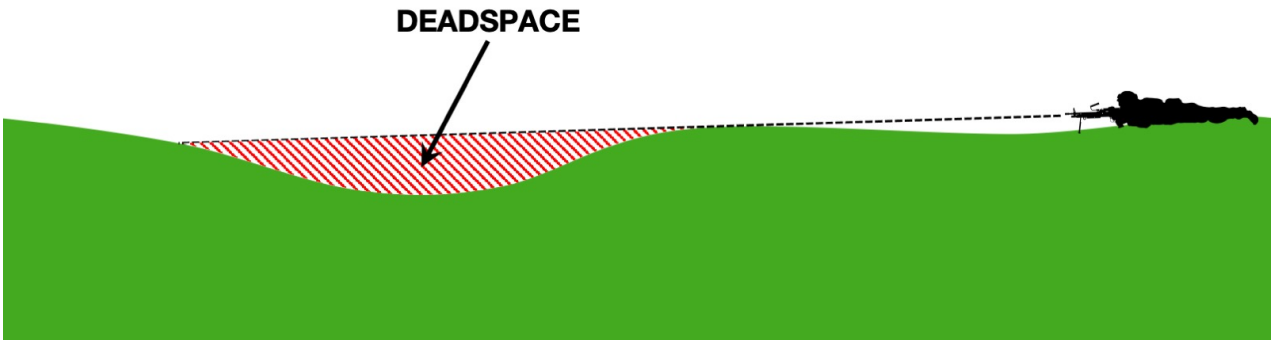
LEFT LIMIT: You see the clump of trees right in front of you? Look to the right until you see the first open space. There is one tree with a thin trunk growing up through that open area, do you see it? Ok, to the left of that tree are some bushes on the ground. Just to the left of those bushes is a thin, evergreen tree with a small bush behind it. Do you see it? Yes? Ok that is your left limit.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: ASSIGNING SECTORS OF FIRE

Dead Space

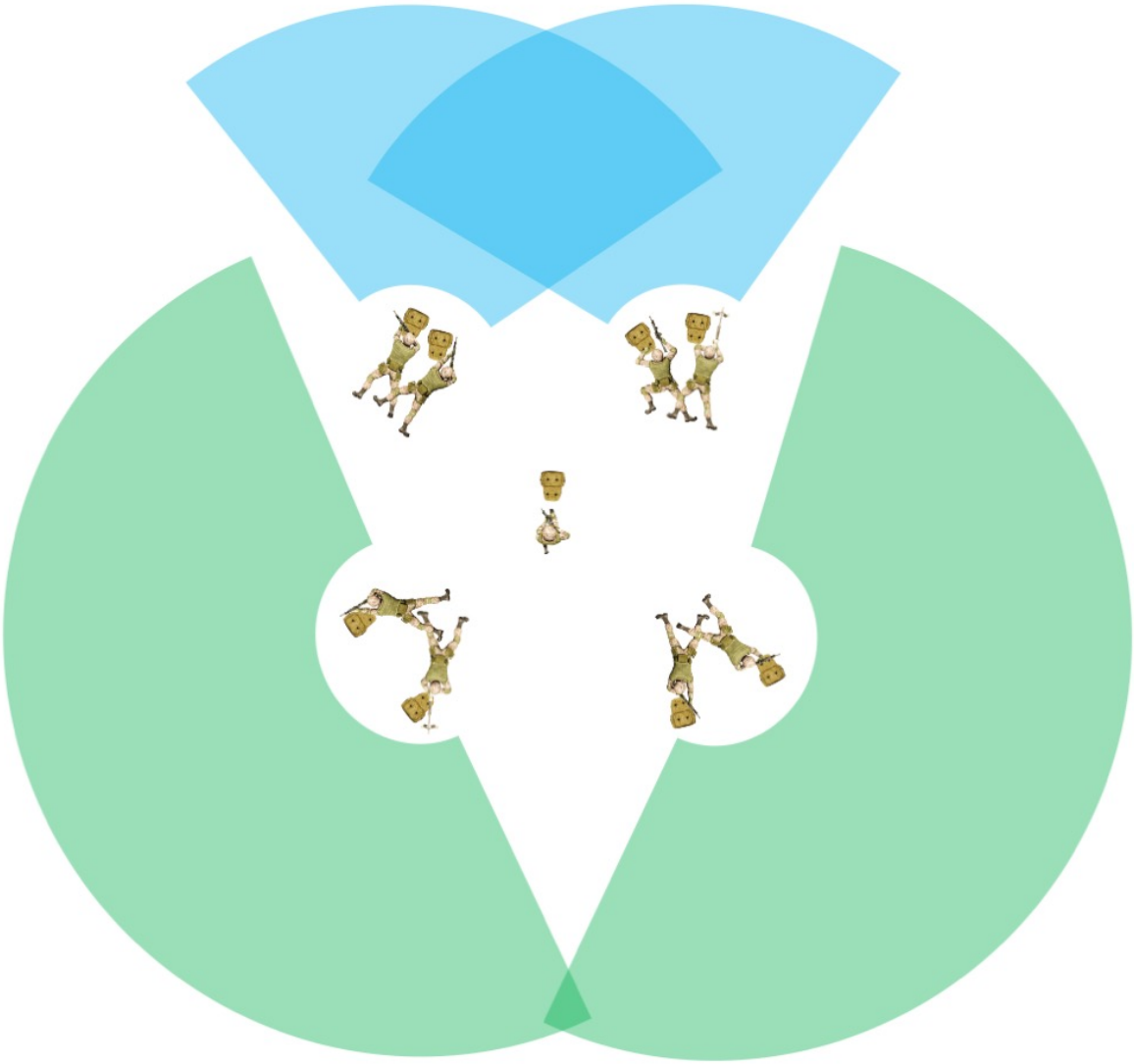
When assigning sectors, you will identify some areas within each sector where an enemy could hide. This could be areas behind a small hill, or sunken areas in a dip in the terrain as in the example below. These areas are known as dead space and they are areas that you cannot engage with direct fire weapons like rifles or machine guns. It is important to identify these areas and plan for what to do should the enemy try to take advantage of them. If you are particularly concerned about certain areas of dead space you may want to assign indirect fire weapons (such as grenade launchers or mortars) to cover these areas. You may also be able to emplace obstacles, traps or mines to block off these areas. As already discussed, this manual does not go into detail on defensive planning and operations but at the most basic level, it is important to understand the concept of dead space and how to employ the squad's weapons accordingly.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: ASSIGNING SECTORS OF FIRE

Uneven Sectors

In the example from earlier in this chapter, the sectors of fire for each strongpoint were all evenly distributed. In some cases, even distribution of fire might be a good idea. In other cases, you might want to mass the majority of your defensive firepower in one direction to cover a specific threat or danger area. In the example below, all of A Team's firepower is primarily focused between the 11-o'clock and 1-o'clock directions while B-Team covers the rest of the 360-degree arc. This is just one example of how the squad leader might want to mass his defensive firepower in one particular direction while assuming risk in other directions.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: BREAKING CONTACT

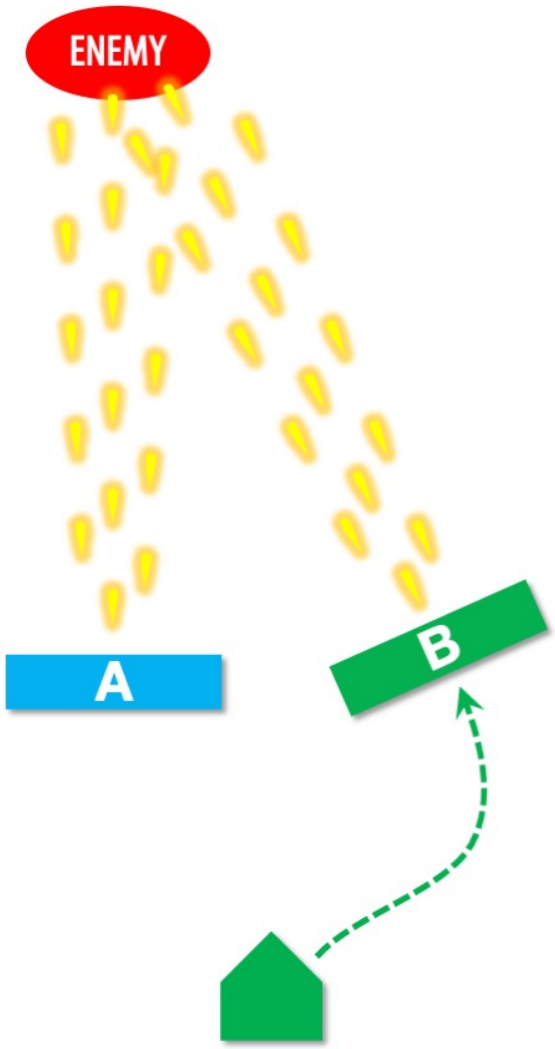
STEP 1: Lead Team Makes Contact and Returns Fire

Breaking contact falls under the category of defensive combat. In some situations, you might make unexpected contact with enemy forces and decide that you want to break contact or pull back. This might be because you have encountered a large enemy force or because you do not want to become decisively engaged with the enemy. The maneuver begins like any other battle drill with the lead team coming on-line and laying down suppressive fire.

DEFENSIVE COMBAT: BREAKING CONTACT

STEP 2: Trail Team Moves into Support Position

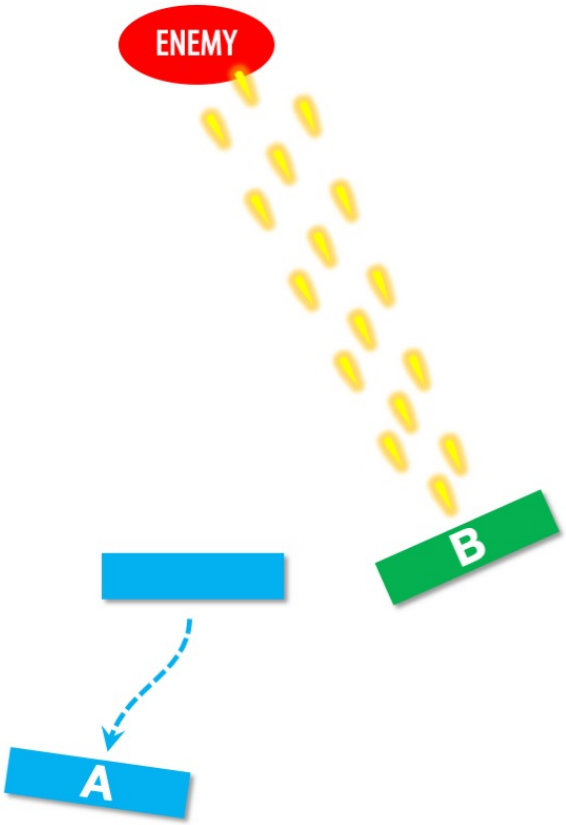
Once you decide to break contact, the squad leader will push the trail team into a position where both teams can fire on the enemy. In the example below, the squad began in echelon formation which can make it easier to push the trail team out to the side. Also, in the example below, B Team moves up online with A Team in order to mass maximum firepower on the enemy and stem his advance. In other cases, B Team might pull back at an angle to a position where it is still possible to fire on the enemy. This will help the squad break contact faster but the massing of fire on the enemy might not be as effective.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: BREAKING CONTACT

STEP 3: A Team Pulls Back with B Team in Support

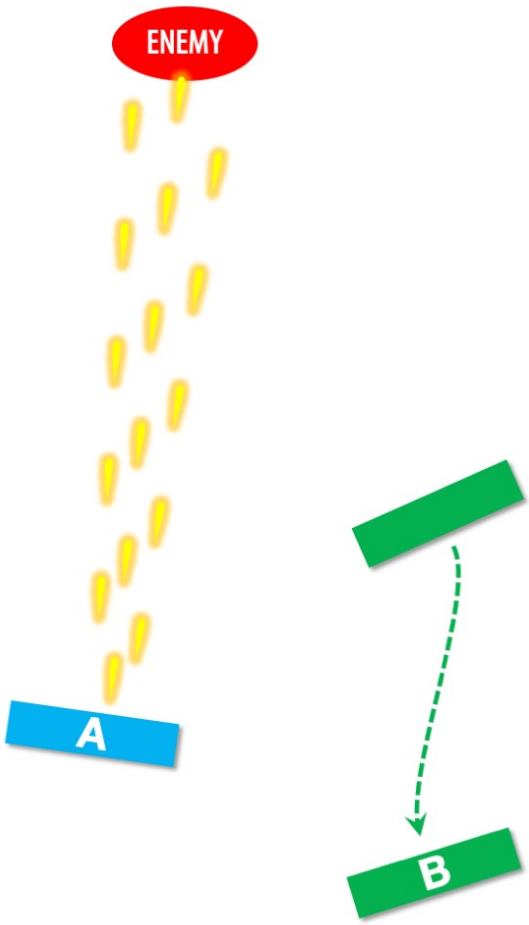
With both teams laying down suppressive fire on the enemy, fixing the enemy in place, one team can bull back and begin creating distance. As with any maneuver, the teams will want to take maximum advantage of the terrain to protect themselves from enemy fire and to maximize the effectiveness of their own fire.



DEFENSIVE COMBAT: BREAKING CONTACT

STEP 4: A Team Provides Support while B Team Pulls Back

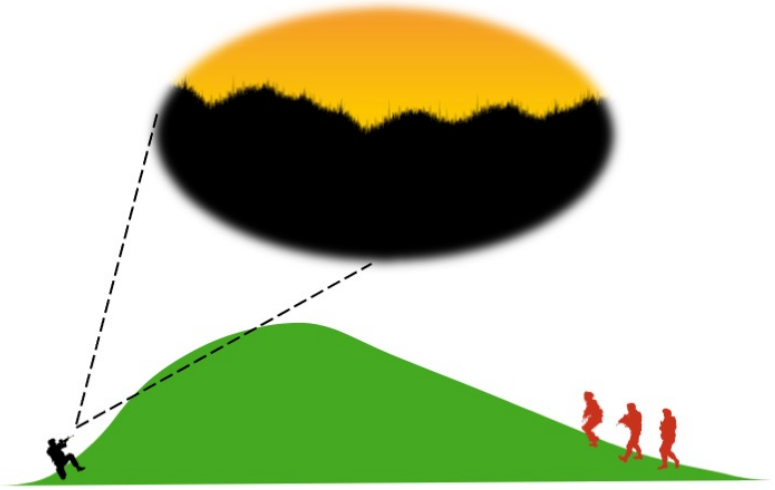
After pulling back, A Team will identify a good position to provide supporting fire, stop, come on-line and begin firing on the enemy. Once the volume of fire is enough to keep the enemy suppressed, B Team will fall back to create additional distance, then stop at a new support position and continue laying down fire. The squad will continue bounding back in this way until it has broken contact with the enemy. Keep in mind that the enemy might try to pursue and you might need to continue bounding back, using terrain to your advantage until contact is broken.

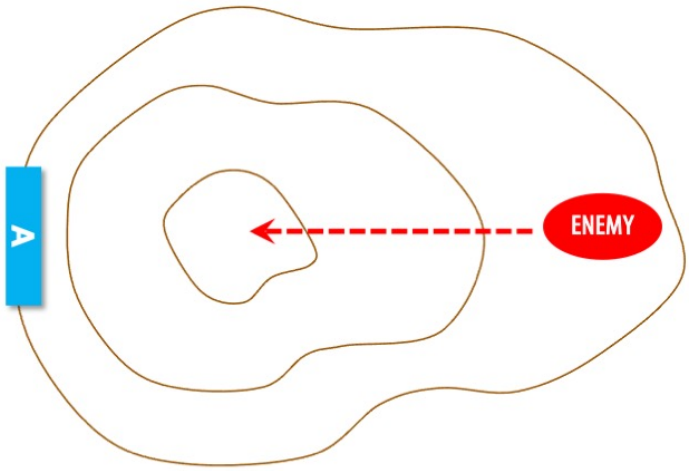


DEFENSIVE COMBAT: REVERSE SLOPE DEFENSE

STEP 1: Set Up on the Reverse Slope

While your defensive options as a lone squad are limited, one technique that can prove very effective, especially against a larger force, is the reverse slope defense. This technique is also particularly effective around the time of dawn, dusk or on nights when the sky is illuminated. During these times, the low ground is dark but it is easy to pick out silhouettes against the sky. In the example below, you set up on the reverse slope and wait in ambush for the enemy. The figure in the illustration is kneeling but in reality your force will probably be prone and behind cover. Note that the enemy cannot see you as they approach.

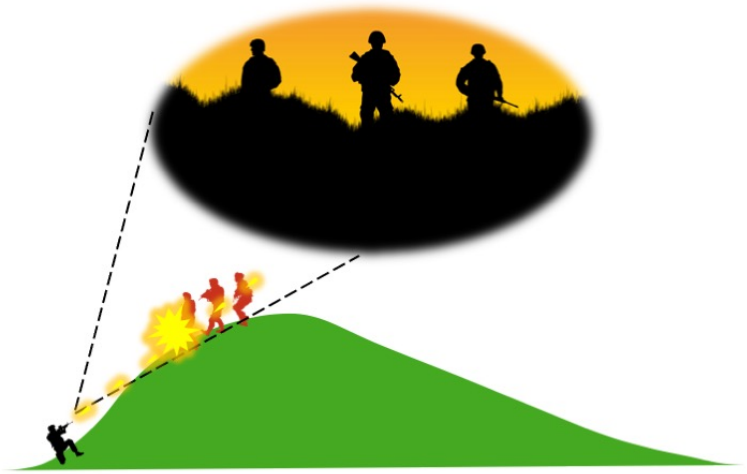


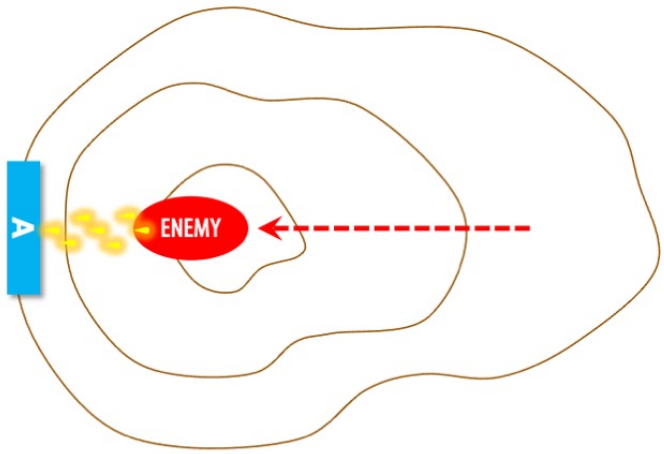


DEFENSIVE COMBAT: REVERSE SLOPE DEFENSE

STEP 2: Engage the Enemy as He Crests the Hill

As the enemy crests the hill, they silhouette themselves against the sky, making themselves easy to see and engage. You remain in the low ground where it is difficult for the enemy to spot you. This makes it almost certain that you will surprise the enemy. By the time the enemy sees you it is generally too late. As already mentioned, this technique can be effective against a larger force since only a portion of the force can crest the hill at any one time. You can engage the troops coming over the hill but any other enemy troops further back in the formation will still not be able to see you or engage you. When conducting a reverse slope defense, you must still be careful of enemy elements flanking around to attack you from the sides.





FURTHER TRAINING
Courses and Resources

This manual provides an overview of squad-level infantry rural combat. However, the manual leaves many areas unexplored especially when it comes to other elements of infantry combat including mission planning, small unit patrolling, ambush, recon, machine gun employment and deliberate defensive operations. There are a variety of other Special Tactics manuals, both current and in production, that are designed to complement this manual. For more information on these manuals, please visit **www.specialtactics.me.**

Every Special Tactics manual has a companion online course. If you cannot find the online course associated with your manual that means it is still in production and has not yet been released. Visit our website to explore our growing selection of online courses. Online courses compliment the material covered in the manual and present knowledge and information in a variety of multimedia formats including interactive presentations, animations, videos and podcasts. All online courses also include interactive quizzes, tests and a serial-numbered completion certificate.

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